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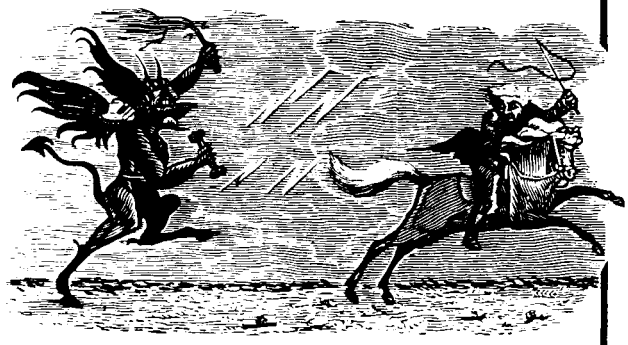

Mark Twain said he didn't believe in Hell but was afraid he'd go there. Isn't that a problem with atheism and all those godless "isms" – Freudianism, hedonism, Marxism, etc. – that have fascinated apparently intelligent people? You just can't be sure there isn't a God, a Judgment, a Devil, and a Hell.

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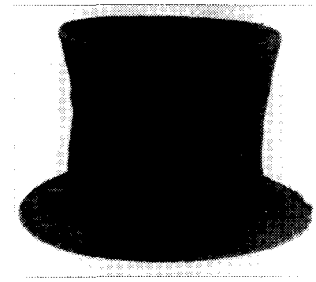

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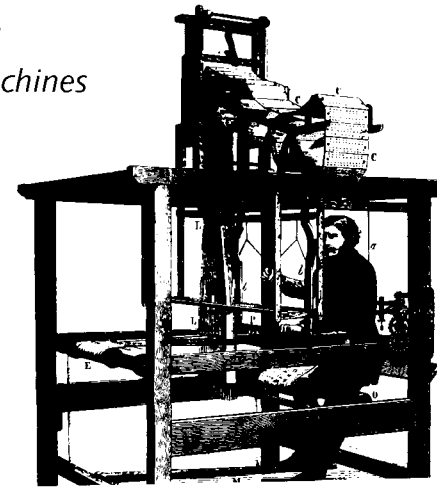

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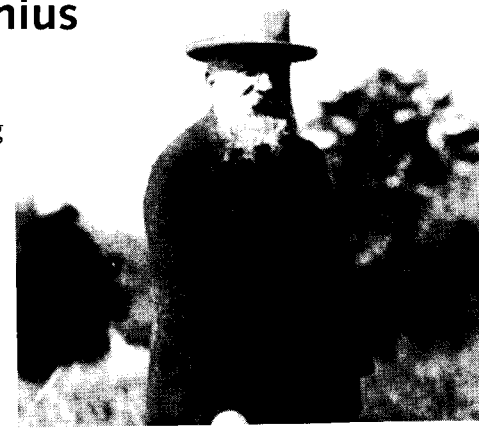

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Decline & Blumenthal

ARISTIDES

When a friend asked me what I was writing, I replied that I was planning an essay I intended to call "Decline and Bloomin' Fall." "That's interesting," she said, "but tell me, who is Blumenthal?" I have known no Blumenthals but two Blumenfelds in my life, both men: one is now in his eighties and in the jewelry business; the other is someone with whom I went to high school, who later went on to medical school, after which he repaired to Texas and, far from declining or falling, so far as I know has risen and continues to ascend. Still, "Decline and Blumenthal," which ought to be the title of a good Bernard Malamud story, is too fine to toss away, and so I shall retain it. Besides, it has just the right jauntiness for an essay on a subject that can use all the comic relief it can get.

Not long after the gift of this lovely title, I came across a piece of Australian slang that I had not previously heard: "He's lost the plot." I gather you say about someone who has gone off on a fairly long tangent, or who is just plain nuts, that he has "lost the plot." Something very useful about that phrase; something much better than the simpler "He's lost it" or other ways of suggesting that the next fellow is of course quite mad. Since the plot here has to do with a little entity called Western civilization—"Western Civ," as college students call it—and is a pretty complicated story, I suppose it is fairly easy to lose. If after reading this you think I've lost the plot, please send, in my name, a pint of Play-Doh and a thousand-piece puzzle of a serene landscape to your local insane asylum.

Let us begin with typographical errors, of which I hope none has cropped up thus far in this essay. In my last essay such an error appears in my penultimate paragraph. Four people proofread this essay, I among them. In an essay of mine in another magazine, the word *the* appears twice in a row. In the postscript to a friendly letter, a correspondent notes that on page two hundred and something of my most recent book the word *shear* appears where *sheer* is wanted. Since I am one of the most fallible of proofreaders, I hire—and share the cost with my publisher for—the services of a professional proofreader. Not to sufficient avail, apparently.

I once heard it said that the *National Geographic* has never had a typographical error in its entire history. I heard this nearly twenty years ago. Not a regular reader of the magazine, I cannot say if the record is still intact. But if it was true then, I hope it's still true now, for every other magazine I read contains typos, as they are called in the trade, and so do most books, even from old and once-reliable English firms. Many writers, editors, and publishers blame this on the new computer printing. I am myself inclined to think otherwise. I am inclined, in fact, to agree with Evelyn Waugh, who once said that, now that they no longer defrock priests for sexual perversities, one can no longer get any decent proofreading. What Waugh meant, of course, was that there were no longer people around with both the learning and the intellectual conscience to get such small but crucial details as proofreading absolutely correct. Decline, alas, and Blumenthal.

One run down in the ninth, we have men on first and second with no outs. The man at bat earns an annual salary of $2.6 million, not counting, I am sure, bonuses. He is at the plate with instructions to bunt—a sensible act that will send the men on base down to second and third, making it possible to score the man on third with a sacrifice fly that will tie the game. Except that the man at bat, who is probably earning more for this afternoon's work than

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one of Evelyn Waugh's defrocked priests earned for a year of proofreading, immediately demonstrates that he hasn't a ghost of a hint of a clue about how to bunt. That laying down a bunt is something every boy in every schoolyard in America was once expected to know how to do and is one of the fundamentals of the game is probably not an argument that would be especially cogent to this guy. Learning a small but essential self-sacrificial act such as bunting is not, in any case, how he came to be earning $2.6 million a year. So on his second inept attempt at a bunt, he pops the ball up to the pitcher, who easily doubles the already running man off second. The next man up hits the requisite fly ball to left—a fly ball that might have tied up the game and taken it into extra innings—which depressingly ends the game. Our $2.6-million-dollar man will probably get a salary increase next year, bringing his earnings up, I should estimate, to not less than $3.5 million. Decline, I say, and Blumenthal.

I not long ago went with a friend to buy clothes at a store where I have shopped since college days. I had taken my sons to shop at this same store—not literally at the same store, but the same store in its previous location. My old salesman at the old location died, and I never go into the store without thinking of him: a beautifully turned out man with white hair who lived for trips to Paris, where one of his children resided. My new salesman is a man who looks to be in his late sixties. I find him simpatico also. He once told me, not without chagrin, that he has a grandson of twenty-five who doesn't know how to knot a necktie. I suggested that he needn't worry, since most men of his grandson's generation will doubtless be buried in denim wearing baseball hats turned backwards. "Please," he said, "don't get me started." He is obviously a man with a decline-and-fall essay of his own that awaits writing.

My friend bought a suit, a sports-jacket, and two pairs of trousers at this store. His bill came to a little more than $1,300. As I recall, they charged him extra for alterations—something I never remember happening in the past. When my friend gave his American Express card in payment of his bill, they ran a check on its validity in front of him. When we came back two weeks later, we discovered that none of the trousers was properly tailored and the suit-coat rode badly on my friend's shoulders. Another trip, two weeks after this, revealed that they still hadn't got the trousers right. My friend agreed to take the sports-jacket but asked for his money back on the other items. He was told that he couldn't have it just then, but that he could either wait for a check to be issued out of the firm's headquarters in New York or return later in the week and late in the day when they could reimburse him with cash. Four disappointing trips—having to pay parking-lot fees each time—for a single sports-jacket, and one that, I am told, is not wearing all that well. I neglected to mention that this store had some years before been taken over by a famous firm of English discounters, whose name isn't but perhaps ought to be Decline and Blumenthal.

Typos, bad bunting, poor craftsmanship, wretched service—I am trying to start small here so as not to lose the plot. If one wishes to chronicle a decline and fall, how much better to be able to start as Edward Gibbon did: "It was at Rome, on the fifteenth of October, 1764, as I sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol, while the barefooted friars were singing vespers in the temple of Jupiter that the idea of writing the decline and fall of the City first started in my mind." It was at Wrigley Field, at Brooks Bros., while proofreading that the idea for "Decline & Blumenthal" came to me. Unlike Gibbon's, mine is scarcely an original idea. Nearly everyone I know lives with the sense of serious decline if not impending fall. Our gains—chiefly in technology, medicine, and science—all seem so uncertain, our losses so absolute. Or so, when queried, do most people feel.

No, it is not at all easy to keep the plot straight. Apologies to Professor Heisenberg, but we have here a subject in which uncertainty becomes almost a principle. For one thing, in claiming a decline I have to consider my age—fifty-six as I write—and whether good traditional old-timer's solipsism hasn't kicked in. No longer a "sprung chicken," as an immigrant woman I know once put it, am I seeing nothing more than my own decline writ large in my society and in all of Western civilization? Certainly, I would not be the first person to have done so. "The decent pleasures of life," H. L. Mencken wrote in his sixty-sixth year, striking the characteristic note, "have all diminished enormously in my time." At the close

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of *Before and After Socrates*, F. M. Cornford writes: "Then nothing remains but the philosophy of old age, the resignation of twilight that deepens over the garden of Pleasure and the hermitage of Virtue." I read that and wonder, Is England ever again to produce another scholar with the deep lucidity of F. M. Cornford? Seems, alas, unlikely.

Reading David Cannadine's study of G. M. Trevelyan, one discovers that Trevelyan himself had fairly early got into the decline-and-fall mood. Trevelyan's dates are 1876–1962, but as early as the end of World War I, not yet fifty, the historian writes: "I don't understand the world we live in, and what I understand I don't like." In his *British History in the Nineteenth Century*, Trevelyan, getting into the swing of things, noted: "In the seventeenth century, Members of Parliament quoted from the Bible; in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from the classics; in the twentieth century from nothing at all." In the late twentieth century, it probably wouldn't surprise Trevelyan to learn, most politicians not only have ceased quoting but have had others, alas, compose most of their written and spoken utterances. (I see that I have already used up the legal limit of alases in this essay.)

Although I look gloomy, by nature—you're going to have to take my word on this—I am not. I don't think of myself as having much taste for declines or falls. I'm not a Wagner, Mahler, Hieronymus Bosch, Nietzsche man; I'm a Mozart, Ravel, Matisse, William James man. Where my taste runs to pessimists, it is the laughing pessimists I prefer: Karl Kraus, Justice Holmes, Mencken. I like a good joke maybe even a little better than the next fellow.

I'm an Apollonian kind of guy. I can't bear to think of those four horsemen of the apocalypse; I prefer instead the prospect of prancing pinto ponies wearing red cockades and ridden by smiling multiracial kids. Joy, not sorrow, stimulates my imagination. A picnic lunch on the grass with friends, not solitary confinement in a Kafka novel, is my notion of a swell afternoon. I hope I haven't lost any standing in thus admitting to being, in effect, the intellectual equivalent of a Rotarian, but I feel the need to establish my bona fides in making plain that decline and fall is emphatically not my idea of a good time.

One day over the food of my people (Chinese), I asked my lunch companion, a retired businessman perhaps eight or nine years older than I, whether he thought we are living in an era of decline and fall. Lowering his chopsticks, he replied, "Well, look at it this way. When we were in high school, the great problems were gum chewing, talking or clowning in class, and (rarely) absenteeism. Today the problems are drugs, possession of guns, the safety of teachers, and teenage pregnancy. Yes, I'd say the argument for a decline can be made without too much trouble."

Of course, such horrendous behavior chiefly takes place in schools in the worst neighborhoods, and there are many—some would say too many—explanations for it. Over the course of twenty years of university teaching, I have not found the quality of my own students to have fallen off greatly; on good days, when these students and I are truly humming, I actually think students are getting better and smarter. But then I am not shocked to learn from studies of student cultural ignorance that only a minuscule portion of seventeen-year-old students have read *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*; at fifty-six, I haven't yet read it myself.

I teach at what is reckoned to be an elite school, so my perspective may not be trustworthy. Might it be that things are declining, not as is usually the case, from the top down but from the bottom up? Charting a decline can be a complicated business, and some people might not be convinced by words alone. I may need some visual aids here: a pointer, a couple of bar graphs, a few multicolored pies, three or four Miró drawings, a Himalayan sprinkling of eraser dust on the shoulders of my teaching blazer. But the fact is—perhaps it would be more correct to say "the fact isn't," since I don't have many hard facts to present—that decline is something one feels in one's bones.

The omnipresence of crime and social sadness has had a good deal to do with this feeling. Big-city life now brings with it the distinct prospect of random death, and if that doesn't get you down, nothing much will. We may, in Daniel Patrick Moynihan's phrase, have "defined deviancy down," but we cannot convince ourselves that it is not a dreary part of all our lives. The daily press, the nightly news, our own eyes are there to remind us that we are living with major social problems from which perhaps protection but no real hiding is possible. In the past, people such as I believed that all was rectifiable by better education, so-

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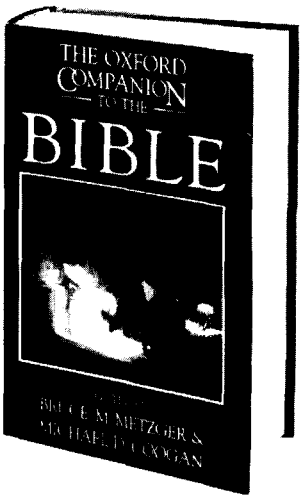

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cial patience, and goodwill all around. It is becoming harder and harder to believe this and easier and easier to believe that we shall eventually be swamped by our ghastly social problems—it is becoming easier and easier, in other words, to believe we are living in a period of staggering decline.

The late Arnaldo Momigliano, in a brilliant essay entitled "Declines and Falls" (AMERICAN SCHOLAR, Winter 1979/80), quickly surveyed some of the theories by which declines of the past have been explained. Justus Liebig, for example, had the notion that societies declined when the mineral constituents of their soil were exhausted; Cesare Lombroso argued that great historical changes, declines among them, are brought about by madmen; Otto Seeck felt that social struggles, wars, and religious persecutions used up the best men, leaving opportunists and the dregs of societies to survive and help bring about decline. Other historical explanations for decline that Momigliano mentions include race mixture, climate change, body exhaustion. Spengler, Toynbee, & Co., partial though they were to cyclical theories of history, tended to feature decline.

The context for Momigliano's observations was a reconsideration of Gibbon's own views about the decline and fall of Rome. Cutting through all sorts of theoretical niceties, Momigliano maintains that "ultimately Rome fell because it was conquered. German tribes took over the Western part of the Empire. If we want a cause, this is the cause." But he then goes on to say that we do not want that cause "because we rightly feel that it does not make the situation meaningful; it is too obvious or too trivial really to explain what happened. . . . Anything which makes a situation meaningful can be turned into a cause, either in isolation or in conjunction with other elements." What made Gibbon so penetrating, in Momigliano's view, was that, in charting the decline and fall of Rome, he grasped, through the grandeur of his perspective, "that late antiquity meant the replacement of paganism by Christianity." Less interested in assigning causes, Gibbon understood an underlying situation.

One can assign causes aplenty to the feeling of decline in the air just now, almost all of them tenable, but none convincing unless tethered to a proper description of the general situation in which they are taking place. Why is it, for example, that I do not believe that men of the combined learning and good sense of Arnaldo Momigliano are likely to walk the earth soon again? Why am I dispirited at reading that, in a small Texas town northwest of Houston, not only are four of fifteen of the local high school's cheerleaders pregnant, but the school board feels it would be legally hazardous—it fears litigation from women's and civil liberties groups—to ask them not to perform their cheerleading? My spirits aren't exactly lifted when I learn—thanks to the *New York Times Magazine*—that "kids know the names of more models than ex-presidents." But then an ad in the same paper carries a blurb for a novelist that reads, "Imagine Kathryn Davis as Henry James, only witty," which, since Henry James was probably the wittiest American who ever lived, causes me only to mutter, "Decline, my dear Blumenthal, everywhere decline."

"Gosh, honey," as Adam said to Eve on their way out of the Garden of Eden, "I guess we're living in an age of transition." Is there, in this feeling of decline I sense so poignantly, nothing more than the sense that the old world I loved is dying and a new world is aborning? How, after all, do I know that this new world isn't likely to be superior to the world it is replacing? If a new world is truly struggling to be born, ought not one—oughtn't I?—do one's best to help it along? What good does my complaining do? This past summer, outside the ballpark, the man from whom I usually buy my $2 bag of peanuts asked me how I was doing, and when I answered "Could be better," he shot back: "How bad can things be when you're able to get away on a beautiful afternoon in the middle of the week to watch a ball game?" I told him he had a point, neglecting to add that I had tickets between home and first base precisely eight rows off the field.

No point in pretending that we have all only recently left Eden, even though those of us who are old enough can distinctly recall what we think was a splendid prelapsarian time. Real improvements have come about in my lifetime. I find no difficulty in coming up with a list of material items, from gym shoes to the most intricate surgical procedures, that have made life better. I once heard a story about a man, a Southerner whose family owned a vast cotton company, who on the night of Neil Armstrong's landing on the moon, asked his father if he thought he would ever live to see

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such a thing. "Son," his father is said to have replied, "I never thought I would live to see the day when I could relieve myself in my own house."

On the spiritual side, I can think of only a single item of improvement, and it is not a small one: the world seems more tolerant—or at least officially tolerant, and official is a lot—of minority groups of all kinds than it did when I was young. But this toting up of material and spiritual progress is apparently an old game. In *France, Fin de Siècle,* Eugen Weber makes the point that, in his investigation of the end of the nineteenth century among the French, "the discrepancy between material progress and spiritual dejection reminded me of our times. So much was going right, even in France, as the nineteenth century ended; so much was said to make one think that all was going wrong."

A historical cliché has it that a century's end—any century's end—brings on a wave of general malaise, that old *fin de siècle* feeling. As Professor Weber writes: "The notion of end, somehow, goes with thoughts of decay and diminution."

> It is the *fin de siècle,* the *fin de siècle,*
> Ah life, where is thy snap, thy pop,
> and thy crackle?

A natural end-of-the-century tendency, too, is to see decadence on every hand. A critic of Rodin's sculpture of Balzac noted that people who see it "can know to what perilous degree of mental aberration we sank at the end of our century." Artists evidently felt differently. John Richardson, the biographer of Picasso, notes that the painters of Barcelona tended to believe "that the [new twentieth] century about to dawn would see the emergence of a glorious new art and the coming of a Messianic artist: a Nietzschean superman with a Dionysiac style." Leaving aside the question of whether that artist ever arrived—was he, as Richardson suggests, Picasso?—I think it fair to say that no one, among artists or anyone else, is expecting anything like such an artist to arrive in the twenty-first century.

One of the things that most strongly sends the decline vapors wafting into the air is what seems the absence of first-class men and women in positions of leadership. In this century we have known first financial and now human inflation. This is true not of America alone—"Europeans Fear That Leaders Are Not Equal to Their Task" ran a recent *New York Times* headline—but seems a worldwide phenomenon. I recognize that my plaint here about giants having walked the earth when I was young is scarcely a fresh notion. Tacitus, at the beginning of the *Annals,* speaks of the disappearance of "the fine old Roman character" of the kind found under the Roman republic. Yet the absence of serious people to fill serious jobs has never, at least to me, seemed so striking. A friend not long ago remarked to me that the newly appointed president of a university of great reputation was a man who, in the old days, would have made a middling-quality high-school principal. What applies to university presidents applies to cabinet officers, poets, baseball commissioners, novelists, and maître d's. Only athletes, auto mechanics, and maybe some chefs seem to have improved.

Part of the problem may be that there are men and women now in positions of real power who are younger than I, and they seem to me the thinnest of reeds. I know of men and women holding important judgeships, heading large federal agencies and billion-dollar foundations with whom I wouldn't even care to have to a cup of coffee. Perhaps there is nothing new in all this. As early as 1884, when he was forty-one, Henry James noted that "imbeciles [were apt] to be in very great places, people of sense in small." While on the speaker's platform, on a panel, on some academic board, or on the Council of the National Endowment for the Arts, I have thought of that deft Jamesian phrase and wondered if I myself had not become one of those imbeciles, even though these places are not all that great.

In an old joke, a successful young Englishman, wishing to thank his immigrant Jewish father for helping to put him through Oxford, arranges to have a splendid suit made for the old man at one of the best tailors in London. Two, three, four fittings, and the suit, a work of great elegance, is finally completed. The old gentleman puts on this magnificent garment, and straightaway begins to weep. "Papa," asks his son, "Papa, what is wrong? Are you crying because you are so touched by my gift?" "Not at all, my boy," the man says. "Now that I'm in this wonderful suit, I'm crying because we've lost our empire."

In connection with my own feelings about

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the decline, I find myself a bit in the old gentleman's condition. I don't bemoan the loss of the British Empire so much as the enfeebled condition of Britain that followed from it. Owing to the splendid bravery of the English in World War II, which occurred during my young boyhood, I was an Anglophile right out of the gate. With the exception of its food, England stood for superiority on every front: ties, shoes, umbrellas, tennis racquets—everything English was of the best quality. G. M. Trevelyan, writing about England during the reign of Queen Anne, noted: "What men that little rustic England could breed! A nation of five and a half millions, that had Wren for its architect, Newton for its scientist, Locke for its philosopher, Bentley for its scholar, Pope for its poet, Addison for its essayist, Bolingbroke for its orator, Swift for its pamphleteer, and Marlborough to win its battles, had the recipe for genius." It would be too cruel to adduce contemporary counterparts to those names. The classicist Jasper Griffin, a man of my generation, has averred that an intensive education in the classics of the kind he received as a boy is no longer obtainable in England. Material things, spiritual things, nothing in England seems as good as it once was: the books, the clothes, the cars, not even the eccentrics, nothing compares well. All that is left to the poor English, it seems, are actors, journalists, and heavy irony. Thus it takes an Englishman, Alan Bennett, to remark, in his play *Forty Years On*: "Standards are always out of date. That is what makes them standards."

If England is no longer a model of much that is superior in life, the vistas are no brighter on the Continent. As a young intellectual and aspiring writer, I often found myself looking to Europe, with what I now think a useful feeling of cultural inferiority, for intellectual and artistic figures more impressive than those I thought our country could turn up. No longer. No André Malrauxs or Albert Camus, no Arthur Koestlers or Marguerite Yourcenars, no Ignazio Silones or Primo Levis currently reside in Europe. The United States now exists on a level of at least cultural parity with Europeans, which is not at all comforting, for it only means that Europeans are nowadays quite as unimpressive as we.

"Public Schools Are Failing Gifted Students, Study Says"—a characteristic headline over a characteristic newspaper story about a characteristic failure to cultivate the brightest kids in our schools. Two, perhaps three stories about the failure of education seem to find their way into the press every week: this or that collective test score is lower than last year's, Johnny can't write, spell, read, spit, you name it, poor damned Johnny, that knucklehead. Describing the great slide in education, these stories reinforce as strongly as any other kind of story one's belief in the decline of our civilization.

Because these stories are reported in the media, one is naturally dubious of them. With the exception of obituaries, nothing that appears in the newspaper, one assumes, can be wholly true. But in this realm, anecdotes from friends make one doubt even one's normal dubiety. Years ago a friend, asked to write a college textbook about modern art, was told that the word *bourgeois* was too complicated for undergraduate readers and that he should remove it from his text. (Instead he removed himself from the project, and a fine book went down the tubes.) A man with whom I exchange letters has recently reported to me that he has had to withdraw a manuscript he had submitted to a small university press because "a new editor there . . . eliminated very large chunks of it and rewrote the rest into language geared to retarded ten-year-olds." Such stories are becoming less and less uncommon, and in fact there is now even a name for the impulse at work behind them: it is called "dumbing down." You dumb down something by making sure it is accessible to the least intelligent portion of its potential audience.

This is not my memory of how education worked, or was supposed to work. As best I can recall, my teachers, far from dumbing things down, were regularly smartening things up on me. When I was a student at the University of Chicago—which, I am grimly pleased to discover, was recently named last in a list of schools where a lively party life and fun generally are to be had—I regularly felt out of my depth, over my head, intellectually about to drown. I sat in class worrying about humiliating myself by mispronouncing Thucydides' name: Suckadydes? "Bored and belittled," the story about the public schools failing gifted students reports, "the gifted students underachieve." "Frightened and embarrassed," might run a story about my own experience of educa-

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tion, "the underachievers become a bit gifted fairly fast."

But nowadays where are the teachers to come from who are capable of smartening up the curriculum? I haven't the least notion. The most serious teaching takes place in grade and high schools—there, as they say of surgery, is where lives are saved. In days of yore—excuse the archaic locution, for the time I am about to describe sounds as if it took place when Robin and his merry men roamed Sherwood Forest—the best grade- and high-school teachers tended to be women. Without a doubt, many of them took up such jobs because little of a putatively higher kind of work was available to them. These women are no longer available for essential work of this kind—and for this no one can, or I suppose even should, blame them. Modern feminism, I sometimes think, is about the right of women to spend their lives just as mediocrely as do men.

Here is what I meant when I wrote earlier that our gains in contemporary life all seem so uncertain, while our losses seem so absolute. The bright woman who fifty, forty, even thirty years ago taught school is now instead a lawyer, or a psychotherapist, or a freshly minted M.B.A. with a managerial job. Whether the world needs more lawyers, therapists, corporate managers is a question I am ready to leave open. That it needs more talented men and women teaching in the trenches is not, and I just don't see where we will find them.

I have of late had a certain amount of medical business in the city of South Bend, Indiana ("South Bend, sounds like dancing," says Katharine Hepburn to Jimmy Stewart in *The Philadelphia Story*), and could not help but notice the extraordinarily high quality of nursing care available in that modest-sized town. Some of these nurses have been men, but most have been women. The reason South Bend has so many good nurses, I have concluded, is that it is a small but not especially thriving city without lots of the false work that a larger city provides. Bright young women there do not have so many opportunities to do public relations or interior decorating, or to run fat clinics. The result is that many bright women go into such useful work as medicine.

People may argue about what is or is not useful work, but I, in my own social life, know almost nobody in the United States who *makes* anything. I exclude here the making of deals, or poems, or successful arguments. I mean palpable things: objects, products, commodities. Almost everyone I know is a lawyer, university teacher, writer, physician, broker, editor, or shuffler of one kind of paper or another. At a dinner not long ago, I met a man who actually makes and sells pajamas and robes. I told him I found this startling. As a boy, driving up Western Avenue in Chicago, I saw a street filled with makers: tool and die, sausage, awning, and many other kinds of manufacturers. The sons and daughters of the men who owned these businesses are today probably sociologists, commodities traders, or psychiatric social workers. Is this progress, or is it decline? You tell me, my dear Blumenthal.

Progress, degress—this way to the egress. This Way to the Egress was the sign P. T. Barnum put up to get suckers out of his sideshows; they thought they were on their way to see an exotic bird. Nowadays one reads the metaphysical equivalent of the egress everywhere. One has the feeling of a world done in, used up, played out. In what seems an almost unexceptional statement, the novelist-critic-translator-librettist-screenwriter Anthony Burgess writes that "literature has had it. We have lost interest in language as an imaginative medium, and now we just write to communicate on the most basic possible level." The music critic Samuel Lipman asks, in an essay in the September 1993 *New Criterion*, "Who's killing our orchestras?" So much in contemporary visual art gives the feeling not merely of decline and fall but—I hope the phrase doesn't get around—of post-fall.

In politics, things are not much better. After winning the Cold War, we seem more depressed than exultant. Zbigniew Brzezinski writes of our suffering something he calls "the 'post-victory blues,' " adding that if they do not soon end, "the post-communist transformation will not only be much more painful and prolonged, but its outcome will be even more uncertain." We seem rather in the condition of the people in C. P. Cavafy's poem, "Waiting for the Barbarians." The barbarians never arrive; it would almost be a relief if they had: "And now, what's going to happen to us without barbarians? / They were, those people, a kind of solution."

The pervasive feeling of decline and fall I have been attempting to describe is at bottom

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about demoralization. In good part, I believe, this demoralization is owing to the loss of belief in progress. The United States has always been a country whose underlying assumption has been that of progress—progress unstinting and unrelieved. I did better than my father, and my children shall do better than I—this was the operating assumption. It no longer operates very successfully. For the first time, one hears talk of the downward mobility of children. There are many who freely acknowledge that they will never do so well in the world as their parents. Will people really be content with this arrangement? I wonder. I find I do not easily reconcile myself to it. Nor would I if I were young.

"I realized," wrote Mme de la Tour d'Auvergne in her memoirs, "that the Revolution was inevitable when I noticed that the pâtissier was putting less butter in the brioches." Might one say something similar about the decline being inevitable when one discovers British politicians putting less grammatical English in their speeches, American tennis players less sportsmanship in their matches, Hollywood screenwriters less wit in their scripts? (William Goldman reports that he was asked to take a sardonic reference to Las Vegas as the Athens of America out of a screenplay because the producers were certain no one would understand it.) And what the devil is a brioche anyway?

Walking the streets of any large American city today one meets with the demented and with the hostile young, lending everything a heavy tone of sadness and menace. When I was in Baltimore recently, a city I have always greatly liked, my overriding impression was that the whole place could use a paint job. I have begun a quiet campaign to change the sobriquet of New York from The Big Apple to the more fitting The Big Crazy, after The Big Easy, which New Orleans is called. On the Chicago El one bright Saturday morning, I rode from the Loop with a carload of young, my guess is unmarried, mothers, youth-gang members, two men selling a newspaper to help the homeless, and a thin, middle-aged transvestite who, I do believe, winked at me as he departed the train at Clark and Division. On the Howard-Jackson line, it was an A Train, but in such company the strains of Duke Ellington were not to be heard.

Twist the blinds, open the windows, for God's sake let in some air. All this depression is beginning to get even me, its dispenser, down. Decline and fall is, after all, only a metaphor. When it comes to that, we have probably been on a fairly steady decline since the fifth century B.C. in Athens. History might be, in Gibbon's famous words, "little more than the register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind," yet along the way there have been delights, splendors, heroism, and much joyous laughter. If we seem to be living in the bodeful night, if the world seems to be losing its principle of existence, if everyone seems to be rushing to blow out the trembling match of culture and leave us in darkness, if nothing less than a radical change of heart seems to be required to save us from further decline, then those who love life are under the obligation not to desert it—not yet anyway. Best not to concentrate altogether on the sycophancy, cowardice, and fraudulence of a society that feels as if it's in decomposition. Better to think instead of beautiful children in concentrated play, of Mozart's music for oboe and harp, of Winesap apples and cold green grapes, of largehearted men and women who refused to be daunted in much darker times than ours.

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Psychotherapy Awry

PAUL R. McHUGH

PSYCHIATRISTS ARE PHYSICIANS who treat patients for troubled thoughts, moods, or behavior—sometimes with medicine, sometimes with talk, often with both. Psychotherapy is the term for the talk treatments. It is an indispensable psychiatric skill but differs radically in its attributes from more familiar medical or surgical procedures. Psychotherapy works for patients as an experience—an experience, specifically, of talking and listening to an expert—and finding, from within that experience, ways to solve a problem.

At its best, psychotherapy helps patients by getting them to reflect on themselves. With psychotherapy, patients can come to appreciate how their own thoughts and attitudes contribute to their troubles. They may find, in counsel with someone they have reason to trust, better approaches to deal with the world.

This fairly rudimentary description, although based on empirical evidence, ignores an awkward inclination of psychotherapy that represents a long-standing problem for psychiatry. Psychotherapists—as they try to grasp the inner world of patients—can easily slip into raw romanticism. The romanticist tendency in psychotherapy is to rely upon feelings for evidence, on metaphors for reality, on inspiration and myth for guidance. Such romanticism has been a recurrent temptation for therapists confronted by patients with perplexing problems.

Among psychiatrists, a long, growling dispute—about twenty years in duration—has been fought and is now ending between romanticists and the empiricists, who insist that all the practices of psychiatry be based upon observation and methodical study of patients. This dispute is ostensibly about psychotherapy but actually is about the proper direction psychiatry itself ought to take. At stake is who will command the future of psychiatry and, more important, how patients will come to be treated.

The empiricists are winning because their approach has ex-

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panded, in a clear and gratifying way, our knowledge of mental disorders. The romantics, in my view, are losing not because they fail to provide helpful proposals for psychotherapy. This is their strength. They are losing because, as romantics will, they have become infatuated by their own thought. They claim to know things they never try to prove. They are charmed by novelty and ignore, even disdain, drab facts. More recently, in their thinking they have taken a nightmarish turn towards chaos that has caused patients and their families much suffering.

As someone who trains psychiatrists, it is my responsibility to explain these complex matters to students, especially those who, as resident physicians, are entrusting the formative years of their professional lives to me. I want them to understand the issues of the dispute so that they can follow an educational path with a future. For this purpose, case studies or vignettes in which an overemphasis on romantic inspiration led to mistreatment are extremely helpful. A compelling and unusually detailed example of such a case came to my attention when, in the summer of 1992, I received a call from the Board of Registration in Medicine of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to confer over a complaint of the most serious psychiatric malpractice.

II

The case in question involved a Cambridge psychiatrist and a Harvard Medical School student who consulted her. Its tragic culmination in the suicide of the medical student, a promising young man, and the exposure of some very strange psychotherapeutic practices on the part of a respected psychiatrist, prompted investigation.

The records and depositions I reviewed were remarkable in providing a rare uncensored view of psychotherapy (they are all now public documents, so that no clinical confidences are violated by discussing them here). They disclose how the therapist lost her way. She neglected standard psychiatric practices, adopted views about the patient that were not true, and acted towards him in ways that were, not to put too fine a point on it, not good. The incident reveals just how far from sound judgment romanticized leanings can carry a therapist, and it teaches important lessons about contemporary psychiatry and psychotherapy.

In July 1986 Paul Lozano, an M.D.-Ph.D. student at Harvard Medical School and member of a Mexican-American family from El Paso, sought treatment for depression from Dr. Margaret Bean-Bayog, a school-affiliated psychiatrist. She restricted her evaluation of his con-

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dition to the information he could provide. She never attempted to contact any member of his large family for other facts about his background. Indeed, she resisted efforts on their part to reach her. Nonetheless, Dr. Bean-Bayog concluded that his depression—which manifested itself in delusional, self-blaming, and suicidal ideas—was owing to years of sexual abuse by his mother when he was a child. Paul Lozano had no memory of such abuse, but the doctor proposed that strong repression, in response to the shocking experiences, had pushed it beyond his memory's reach.

Dr. Bean-Bayog delegated responsibility for pharmacologic treatment of Paul Lozano's depressive symptoms to another physician, while she herself took up an emotionally evocative psychotherapy with Lozano. She made many efforts to bring to light in him memories of his putative childhood abuse and attempted to induce in him feelings of devotion for her similar to those a two- or three-year-old child might have for his mother.

The patient's state of mind fluctuated during his four years of almost daily psychotherapy with Dr. Bean-Bayog. Depression and suicidal thoughts came and went. He grew dependent on the therapist and frequently expressed his love and need for her.

For a period of time in the midst of this therapy the doctor was overcome by erotic feelings for the patient. She sustained and embellished her feelings by writing elaborate fantasies of sexual play and sadomasochistic encounters with him that had a distinctly pornographic character.

During the course of treatment, Paul Lozano required several admissions to psychiatric hospitals where the medical staff, particularly at Harvard's McLean Hospital, viewed Dr. Bean-Bayog as overly involved with him. A psychiatrist at McLean warned her on June 23, 1987: "There is an ongoing question about how much his present therapy is supporting him or stirring up almost inconsolable yearnings and conflictual feelings." Dr. Bean-Bayog, however, continued—with some support from her own chosen consultants—to emphasize the themes of maternal sex abuse, the need to bring to light the repressed memories, and the importance of regression to childhood in her treatment.

After four years of this intense therapy, Dr. Bean-Bayog began to separate herself from Paul Lozano and finally did so in the spring of 1990. A stormy four months followed for the patient, whose suicidal thoughts increased and depression worsened. He was seen in several different Massachusetts hospitals; he was eventually treated vigorously for his depression with a combination of antidepressants, lithium, and electroconvulsive therapy. He responded well to this treatment

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and had two or three months of freedom from his major symptoms. During this time he told his new doctors that he had not been abused by his mother, but allowed that he affirmed Dr. Bean-Bayog's assessment because he had been anxious to retain her interest in him.

Lozano turned over to his new doctors letters, photographs, audiotapes, and more than thirty pages of Dr. Bean-Bayog's handwritten sexual fantasies—which he claimed she gave to him—to corroborate what he said was a sexually intimate relationship between them. His new physicians felt obligated to report the possibility of sexual exploitation of the patient to the Massachusetts Board of Registration in Medicine, the body responsible for reviews of physician practice and conduct.

Lozano continued to yearn for Dr. Bean-Bayog. He had qualms of misgiving about revealing their intimacies. On April 2, 1991, before the Board could finish its investigation, Paul Lozano, injecting himself dozens of times with cocaine, took his own life.

The startling and provocative nature of the evidence, and the nasty suspicions about psychotherapy that it aroused, attracted the attention of the press. Much comment was critical of Dr. Bean-Bayog. But in both Boston and the national press, statements of support for her treatment of Paul Lozano by eminent psychiatrists appeared. Some said that Lozano represented an extremely difficult case and that Dr. Bean-Bayog was justified in using unconventional methods to "keep him alive." Others complained that both the publicity and the Board's investigations were conducted in bad faith and that they were sustained because the physician was a woman accused of misdemeanors more often committed by male therapists. Some even proposed that the patient, jealous and angry, was trying to injure Dr. Bean-Bayog—if at first in life, now from the grave.

The magistrate for the Board planned a public hearing where all available documentary evidence of the treatment and the behavior of the physician was to be reviewed. As the psychiatric consultant to the Board, I was expected to provide an opinion about the standards of care reflected in Dr. Bean-Bayog's treatment of Paul Lozano. My testimony was to be rebutted by three distinguished Boston psychiatrists. But, on the day before this hearing, Dr. Bean-Bayog relinquished her medical license—for life, as required by law if resignation comes during an investigation. This rendered moot any assessment of her appropriateness as a physician and psychiatrist. The hearing was canceled.

When she resigned, however, Dr. Bean-Bayog gave the local newspapers a distress-filled statement in which she claimed to have been mistreated by the process of investigation and its publicity. She de-

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nied any wrongdoing or mismanagement in the Lozano case. She accused the dead patient and his family of "false allegations," the state officials of "overreaction," and the media of "pandering to the public appetite for preposterous, salacious scandal." And there the case rests, except to add the later agreement by Dr. Bean-Bayog's insurance company to settle with the Lozano family her malpractice policy's maximum payment of one million dollars.

A talented young student-scientist at the Harvard Medical School is dead. His family, and particularly his mother, remains to this day besmirched by the accusations. A physician with a national reputation is disgraced, her medical career snuffed out. There remains much finger-pointing, but newspaper reports state—as in the *Boston Globe* of December 17, 1992—"the issues remain unresolved."

III

In point of fact, the issues in this tragic case *are* resolvable—and with ultimate advantage to an understanding of psychiatry. The case itself is quite simply an example of how *not* to practice psychiatry and psychotherapy today. It also shows how certain beliefs and ways of thinking—mostly romanticized in nature—can blind one to reality. The record of Dr. Bean-Bayog's treatment of Paul Lozano is an anthology of professional errors, both of omission and of commission, involving matters of fact, logic, and principle.

The patient suffered from a major depressive illness that was recurrent, severe, and intermittently disruptive of his mood, of his capacity to reason, of his behavior. The evidence confirming this opinion is broad and extends from records of the patient's symptoms, the repeated diagnostic assessments by several clinicians, concurring evidence of hospital laboratory tests, some indications that both his mother and brother may also suffer from this illness, and finally Paul Lozano's positive response to adequate antidepressant medication and electroconvulsive therapy.

Depression of this sort has the ineluctable character of a disease, and eventually it did lead Paul Lozano to suicide. During its reign he suffered the typical mental characteristics of depression, ones that should have directed his treatment—both pharmacologically and psychotherapeutically.

The pharmacologic treatment of major depression has been one of the great achievements of contemporary psychiatry. To be effective, however, it must be sustained and closely linked to the patient's symptoms. Dr. Bean-Bayog relegated this crucial aspect of Paul Lozano's treatment to someone whom she did not inform about her

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psychotherapeutic program and whom she seldom consulted. Patients with depression respond best to the combination of pharmacotherapy and psychotherapy, but these need to be carefully coordinated, particularly with a seriously ill person.

Paul Lozano would have been a difficult candidate for psychotherapy—especially the emotionally evocative approach Dr. Bean-Bayog decided to employ—because his depression produced profound and persisting despondency, a deprecatory view of himself, muddled thought, and often brittle emotional responses. He was intermittently swept away by delusional beliefs—"I'm a misfit," "I'm a failure," "I'm despised"—and repeatedly became so disorganized in his thinking as to require hospitalization.

Because Paul Lozano suffered from this kind of depression and these symptoms, even a rehabilitative psychotherapy emphasizing support, concentrating on reality, and coordinated with the proper pharmacotherapy, would have been a demanding professional challenge. To embed this sort of psychotherapy into his overall treatment, Dr. Bean-Bayog would have had to persuade Paul Lozano of the nature and fluctuating course of his depressive condition and insist that he overcome any reluctance to continue his medications. She would have had to harp on the irrational nature of his beliefs and sustain him in realistic appraisals of himself. She would have had to enlist the assistance of his family and his medical school deans—again surmounting any resistance he might have had to this plan—who needed to understand his changing states of mind so as to support and protect him during the recurrences of his symptoms. She also would have had to appreciate how this illness could render him vulnerable to suggestion and to views of himself of a debasing and self-blaming kind.

Dr. Bean-Bayog did little of this. Instead she steered Paul Lozano into a form of evocative insight psychotherapy—a psychotherapeutic approach, derived from its prototype of psychoanalysis, that is designed to mobilize strong feelings in the patient under the assumption that this approach will bring repressed, emotionally charged conflicts to the patient's awareness for resolution.

But Lozano already was disrupted by the intense emotions of his mental illness, which left him as impaired for a review of his past life as he was for appropriately understanding his present life. In *Persuasion and Healing*, their classic and recently republished book on psychotherapy, Drs. Jerome Frank and Julia Frank describe how useful the evocative psychotherapies can be for patients who have some capacity for emotional control and comprehension of reality. Paul Lozano, however, lacked these qualities because of his mental illness. Dr. Bean-Bayog's decision to employ this evocative approach, which

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she made early on after her initial meetings with him, is at least debatable and should have been monitored for its suitability at regular intervals and abandoned when adverse effects, such as those noted at McLean Hospital, became obvious.

Even if one accepts, for the sake of discussion, Dr. Bean-Bayog's choice of therapy, its features became grotesque. She gave Paul Lozano teddy bears to help his regression to a childlike status, calling them "transitional objects" to aid a bridging in therapy of childhood into adolescence. She wrote him letters and notes bearing messages of love and devotion, such as "I am your Mom," "I love you very much," "I'll never leave you." During the course of this idiosyncratic form of therapy, Dr. Bean-Bayog lost control of both the emotions she evoked in the patient and those she evoked in herself. He began to ask her for sex. She began to write wild sexual fantasies about him.

From the record it is difficult to say who was the initiator of this inappropriate sexual behavior, but clearly the professional boundaries between doctor and patient that were Dr. Bean-Bayog's responsibility to maintain were breached. An uncontrolled, complex personal relationship was launched under the guise of therapy. It not only had damaging effects on Paul Lozano but would have harmed any patient.

Paul Lozano and Dr. Bean-Bayog differed on whether a fully consummated sexual relationship developed between them. There is no question, however, that Dr. Bean-Bayog engaged in actions that are forms of "courting" behavior. By "courting" psychiatrists mean actions that ordinarily encourage progressively more intimate relations. Dr. Bean-Bayog fostered an erotic atmosphere in her therapy. She permitted Lozano to take playful and provocative photographs of her. She used loving language to describe their relationship in many of the letters she wrote to him. She did not suppress but elaborated her own erotic feelings for him in richly detailed sexual fantasy writing, and she either gave these products to him, as expressions of her longings for him, or did not ensure that the scripts were inaccessible.

Dr. Bean-Bayog later claimed that this writing was her private way of examining her sexual feelings and bringing them under control. Sexual fantasy writing seems more likely to elaborate than to control such feelings. Certainly, it has never been an outlet recommended for therapists who find themselves in Dr. Bean-Bayog's predicament. Imagine how contrary to common sense it would be if the patient angered her and she responded by writing pages of murderous fantasies that she then kept around the office for reference.

Dr. Bean-Bayog made strenuous efforts—in the legal depositions that were to precede the hearing and again during her exchanges with the press—to deny that her sexual feelings, fantasies, and

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eroticized interactions with the patient were literally "hers." She always insisted that they be called "feelings in the transference/countertransference sense," intending somehow to sanitize her attitudes and behavior with this professional appellation. Yet a feeling generated during therapeutic encounters, and thus legitimately called an aspect of countertransference, is not any less a personal, real, and compelling feeling. Like any other feeling, it is capable of provoking inappropriate behavior and hence from its inception falls to the responsibility of the expert to control. A countertransference source no more justifies acts against the patient's interest than feelings of love or hate generated in other ways.

This justification by theory put up by Dr. Bean-Bayog and her supporters bears a strong resemblance to the argument in the first chapter of *Pickwick Papers*, where Mr. Blotton calls Mr. Pickwick a humbug. He then mollifies the angry crowd of Pickwick's friends by explaining that he did not mean it in the "common sense" but had used the word in its "Pickwickian sense." "Personally," Blotton wanted all to know, "he entertained the highest regard and esteem for the honorable gentleman, he had merely considered him a humbug in a Pickwickian point of view." Dr. Bean-Bayog and her supporters are bona fide members of The Club when they give this Pickwickian construction to countertransference.

The theme of child abuse, particularly the alleged sexual abuse by Paul Lozano's mother, was central to Dr. Bean-Bayog's diagnosis and therapeutic plan. This, it turns out, does not survive close scrutiny. The allegations emerged in a suspicious way and took on quite incredible features. The notion that Paul Lozano was abused by his mother was from the outset a creation by Dr. Bean-Bayog. She came to this diagnosis because she believed that many of his symptoms are those seen in abused people. She never attempted to verify her suspicions with his brothers, sisters, or family physicians. Paul Lozano did not spontaneously report these alleged incestuous encounters. Only after many therapeutic sessions did Dr. Bean-Bayog persuade him to accept this idea. She had to instruct him to the possibility by having him read articles and books—such as *The Courage To Heal* by Ellen Bass and Laura Davis—that claim (quite without foundation) to know that multiple experiences of heinous and repetitive abuse in childhood and adolescence can be repressed and thus be unavailable to memory.

This concept of repression in child abuse holds that it is possible to live for years with no memory of multiple experiences of violent and defiling abuse at the hands of one's most trusted guardians. Behind this concept is a dramatic, nightmarish, and fundamentally

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romanticist misdirection of psychotherapeutic thought, for repression on this scale calls for an astonishing power of mind. The concept emerged from anecdotes in the popular—indeed paperback—press of the 1970s and 1980s. It is implausible on its face, lacks confirmation by research, and, as Dr. Bean-Bayog did, is usually proposed to patients during therapy without any effort to check any facts. A belief in all-powerful repression often contributes, much as it did here, to redirecting treatment away from real problems as well as to isolating the patient from the natural supports of his family.

Eventually Paul Lozano did begin to report recollections of sexual encounters with his mother, but they took on progressively exotic form, including memories of sex during diaper changes at age two. Detailed remembrances from so early in life are, to put it gently, dubious in the extreme. The fact that Lozano eventually claimed to have them strongly suggests that he did not repress a series of shocking sexual encounters with his mother. It suggests instead that his "memories" were either induced in him (a self-blaming emotionally dependent patient) by suggestions from his trusted therapist or were, as he later claimed, reported by him as a means of retaining Dr. Bean-Bayog's interest and affection. In any case, the evidence in this record for sexual abuse of Paul Lozano by his mother is far weaker than the evidence that Dr. Bean-Bayog was sexually involved with him.

IV

The reasons why Dr. Bean-Bayog's treatment of her patient went radically wrong go beyond these particulars. Throughout the treatment of Paul Lozano the major deficiency was an extended absence of good judgment on the part of Dr. Bean-Bayog. This was displayed in many ways. Chief among them were Dr. Bean-Bayog's overconfidence in her first impressions, her credulity toward theory, her stubbornness in the face of criticism, her rashness with intimacy, and, in the end, her willingness to give up her life's work—a form of professional suicide—rather than explain her practice to the public.

What perverted this physician's judgment? The answer to that question emerges from a study of the language and statements of belief that fill both the case notes and many of the legal depositions of Dr. Bean-Bayog and her consultants.

Most of this is cast, right from the start, in the interpretive idiom of psychodynamic metaphors. Disconcertingly absent is simple description, ordinary exposition of the personal experience of this young student and his family, of the unembellished, mundane humanness of their lives and of their places in this world. Everything is given a

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dubious "depth" of sexual coloration, all is couched in psychologic officialese: transference and countertransference, repression, transitional objects, symbol, and metaphor.

Even Paul Lozano's suicide attempts were explained to the patient by a sexual metaphor. One of the consultants who was asked by Dr. Bean-Bayog to see Paul Lozano during a hospital stay wrote, after his visit with the patient: "Through our conversation he and I were able to relate this [suicidal behavior] to masturbatory excitement in which one retains and maintains control of one's own pleasure, thrill and sexual excitement: control over life and death . . . and freedom in the sense of having his own life in his hands."

Nothing in the Lozano case was seen for what it was, to be judged for itself. Paul Lozano's self-blame was not a symptom of a depressive illness but rather a sign of repressed sex abuse. Dr. Bean-Bayog's pornographic writings were not a surrender to impulse and a breakdown in professional distance but an expression of the countertransference. Everything, even death, was something else.

Officialese has done here what officialese always does—replaced observation, corrupted judgment, and, on more than one occasion, deprived its agent, Dr. Bean-Bayog, of the capacity to see the obvious. The blinding qualities of ambiguous language, murky thought, and unexamined belief were fundamental to all the trouble that followed. Romanticism had run riot, justifying every excess.

V

All patients requiring psychotherapy have a similar debilitating and distressing sense of confusion and incompetence. Jerome Frank has aptly called their state of mind demoralization—a combination of discouragement and perceived loss of self-efficiency. People with such symptoms will be uneasy about approaching a psychotherapist for help if they think an experience in any way resembling Paul Lozano's is what they risk.

There were no obvious warnings to Paul Lozano or his family that he was in danger of mistreatment. He was not, of course, consulting a fringe therapist but a reputable psychiatrist, one associated with the Harvard Medical School. What Dr. Bean-Bayog did seemed to be supported by other psychiatric consultants. When Paul Lozano became acutely ill, he was taken to well-known hospitals and cared for by experienced staffs—on one occasion, he was visited by the chief of the service.

After the tragic outcome of the Lozano case, there were psychiatrists who were willing to state for the local and national press that

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nothing was wrong with Dr. Bean-Bayog's treatment. The case they claimed was just a very tough one. If only people were sophisticated in psychological matters and looked at the elements "in context," they would see that the difficulties lay not with the course of treatment but with the patient and (more subtly implied) with the family. "Providing psychotherapeutic treatment is not like making toll-house cookies," the then President of the Massachusetts Psychiatric Society told the Boston press.

Such statements represented a hasty and reflexive defense of Dr. Bean-Bayog—the group protecting a challenged member—rather than a thoughtful critique of a psychiatric practice to help people understand what happened to Paul Lozano. This was indeed a tough case, as the record shows. But then many psychiatric cases are tough. That is why specialists with advanced training are needed. Better explanations, not professional sarcasm, are required to resolve the concerns it raises and to reassure people considering psychotherapy.

Not only is psychotherapy not the making of toll-house cookies, it is, most distinctly, not a creative art form. It isn't a mystery play; it isn't a secret initiation. It is neither a romance nor a rite. It is instead a professional action that fits into other aspects of patient care according to empirical psychiatric principles that can be made clear to anyone.

In fact, there should be no mystery about what psychiatrists can do. They can: heal the symptoms of some diseases; guide and protect a patient from the promptings of temperament; interrupt destructive behaviors such as addiction; and help a patient rethink his assumptions so as to enhance his capacity to deal with the present and the future.

Psychotherapy plays a role in every one of these actions by explaining the nature of mental symptoms, resolving misunderstandings, or encouraging more constructive life strategies. It helps to restore the patient's sense of self-efficiency. Usually the patient presents the psychiatrist with a combination of problems, as did Paul Lozano, and needs a coordinated treatment plan in which psychotherapy is embedded.

To return to the comments from Boston, it is revealing to view the elements of treatment in context. Psychotherapy does not, after all, occur in an intellectual vacuum. The particular context of any example of psychotherapy can be gleaned from its main preoccupations. A relentless interest in sex and an unbalanced emphasis on deficiencies of the patient's family rather than on any of the family's strengths usually indicate a tight coupling of the psychotherapy to Freudian psychoanalytic thought.

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Although Freud's fame is secure on other grounds, his followers, it is now becoming plain, often overvalued his nineteenth-century Teutonic vision of an irresistible force upon humanity—here tied to the sexual libido which Freud made central to mental life and personal development. In many ways Freud belongs to the family of monorail thinkers that can claim Karl Marx. Freud added a dynamic unconscious running on libidinous energy to all those other impersonal and ineluctable forces—history, economics, the nation-state, and so on—identified east of the Rhine as governing our fate and to which we are but putty.

Such a key to human nature, of course, appealed to psychotherapists (and to a multitude of other articulate people in the twentieth century who joined the psychoanalytic movement and transformed it from a clinical proposal into a highly romanticized social doctrine). It provided—as Karl Popper condemned in Hegel—"a quick initiation into the deeper secrets of this world [without] the laborious technicalities of science which after all may only disappoint by lack of power to unveil all mysteries."

But this intellectual romanticism just won't fit with the empirical knowledge that is advancing the practice of psychiatry today. Single-minded, overconfident, and derived from an outmoded philosophical tradition, it has been the context for many examples of misguided and interminable therapy such as that given Paul Lozano.

Efforts to force psychotherapy along paths suggested by some all-encompassing vision of human nature are being replaced by an approach that develops psychotherapeutic aims from verifiable observations of the patient and the actual circumstances of his life. Since mental disorders come in several forms, they derive from the endless sources of trouble presented by life—including but not limited to those identified by Freud. For any particular patient, though, all sources of trouble—losses, burdens, illness, temperament, habitual attitudes, or simply fears that the future may replay the past—must be explored and *verified* by the therapist, preferably before therapy is launched but definitely as it proceeds and new facts come to light.

Such explorations, in which the patient actively participates, can certainly be laborious and time-consuming—as my resident physicians remind me—and are unlikely to unveil the secrets of human nature. But they will reveal the actual problems the patient faces and the way to combine the several treatments he needs. For his and psychiatry's purposes, that is plenty.

Some rather simple principles of procedure are now, reassuringly, standard in psychotherapy. Early in the course of treatment the psychiatrist should lay out for the patient the logical therapeutic and

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prognostic implications that emerge from a diagnosis. The beliefs underlying a psychotherapeutic plan should be brought to light and scrutinized by the therapist and the patient together in order to decide just how good these are as working assumptions in the patient's case. As the doctor delineates the treatment plan, he or she should describe the patient's role and responsibilities in it. Such "role induction"—to use the professional term—clarifies the mutual expectations for patient and therapist. It makes clear what behavior is intolerable in its course. Finally, if recovery is unexpectedly slow, either the patient or the therapist should request a second opinion. Then the records can be reviewed, the implications of lack of progress explored, and the course of treatment realigned.

VI

There is something more here, though, than principles for effective practice. These briefly sketched points represent the operational implications of the shift—indeed the sea change—from romanticism to empiricism in psychiatry. The inscrutable all-knowing man behind the couch is disappearing from therapy just as sexual metaphor and Greek myth are disappearing from psychiatric explanations.

In their place is an appreciation that mental life is as open to empirical assessment as are other aspects of the world. Empiricism prompts psychiatrists and patients alike to work with what can be observed and confirmed—emphasizing what we know and how we know it. It indicates how decisions for treatment are made, how their strengths are reviewed, and how their errors are corrected. It does not exclude inspiration but keeps it within bounds.

Empiricism is changing the way psychiatrists think and talk. This is a slow process and vestigial elements of romantic excess still intrude—as for example, when every cruel person is called sadistic, and every prideful person a narcissist. But the fears that this shift of emphasis towards empiricism would lead to an abandonment of concern for human feelings and their dynamic interactions has proven groundless. Psychiatrists with an empirical approach are vitally interested in the patient's thoughts and feelings. They know that these mental experiences reveal the burdens and impairments of a patient in need of treatment. In fact, by forsaking the false light of metaphor and myth, psychiatrists have gained a clearer sense of the attributes of patients.

The concern that only biological information and not psychological information would interest the empiricists in psychiatry has been dispelled. The shift from a romantic to an empirical emphasis is not a

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move from dynamic psychiatry to biological psychiatry. Rather empirical information adds facts to a dynamic understanding. Empirical psychology has provided information about temperament and drive that illuminates the distinctions among people in their emotional response to particular ordeals and guides the choice of treatment for alcohol and drug addiction.

The move away from romanticism and towards empiricism is a shift that brings psychiatry closer to contemporary medicine and to the beneficial ways of thought advancing medicine today. We psychiatrists may lose the authority that any cloak of mystery brought us and certainly shall find ourselves more exposed to sharp questioning from patients, their families, and a critical public. If, however, we respond as physicians committed to explaining our work and eliminating errors from it, the prospects for patients will improve. Psychotherapy, properly construed and properly conducted, will be better understood by everyone and will come to have a settled place among the treatments of human illness.

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The Strategic Vision of Alexander Hamilton

THOMAS K. McCRAW

THE YEAR 1993 marked the 250th anniversary of Thomas Jefferson's birth. Celebrations began in January, when Messrs. Clinton and Gore and their spouses toured Monticello, then boarded a bus for Washington and the inauguration. It was a fitting way to begin a new presidency; Jefferson's appeal is as ageless as he himself was versatile. Who else, as one of his early biographers put it, "could calculate an eclipse, survey an estate, tie an artery, plan an edifice, try a cause, break a horse, dance a minuet, and play the violin"?

But nobody does everything well. And today, because national economic problems are so salient, Jefferson's career may be less timely for re-examination (questions of slavery and race aside) than is that of his rival, Alexander Hamilton (1757–1804). In many ways, Hamilton was Jefferson's inferior. He had no eye for art, no hand for drawing, no ear for music. He was a poor politician. But he was as good a writer, a better controversialist, and an immensely more sophisticated economic thinker. Hamilton's economics of national development has the same timelessness as Jefferson's politics of individual liberty. Consider these remarks Hamilton made in 1795 about the problems of taxation in a democracy:

> To extinguish a Debt which exists and to avoid contracting more are ideas almost always favored by public feeling and opinion; but to pay Taxes for the one or the other purpose, which are the only means of avoiding the evil, is always more or less unpopular. . . . Hence it is no uncommon spectacle to see the same men Clamouring for Occasions of expense . . . [and also] declaiming against a Public Debt, and for the reduction of it as an *abstract thesis*; yet vehement against every plan of taxation which is proposed to discharge old debts, or to avoid new [ones] by defraying the expences of exigencies as they emerge.

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In our whole national history, it would be hard to find a comment more germane to fiscal concerns of the last fifteen years.

II

Most people know a little about Alexander Hamilton, but not as much as they do about Washington or Jefferson. They know that his portrait is on the ten-dollar bill, that he was the first secretary of the treasury, that he wrote most of *The Federalist Papers*, and that he was killed in a duel with Vice President Aaron Burr, a political enemy who had challenged him over an imagined personal insult. (Hamilton could easily have avoided the duel, and on the field of honor he threw away his own shot.)

Many Americans do not know that Hamilton was perhaps the greatest trial lawyer of his generation, that he was a key figure in the evolution of judicial review, and that he shaped the American economic system as it developed under the Constitution. Hamilton was the first systematic macroeconomic planner in the United States and one of the first in any country.

Of the six key Founding Fathers—the others being Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and James Madison—Hamilton alone was a "foreigner." He was also much the youngest of the six: fifty-one years younger than Franklin, twenty-five than Washington, twenty-two than Adams, fourteen than Jefferson, six than Madison. He alone died violently, and young, at the age of forty-seven. He composed no autobiography, as did Franklin. He kept no detailed diary or journal, as did Adams and Jefferson. His absorption in public affairs was so obsessive that only small portions of his vast surviving manuscripts have to do with personal matters.

What he did write about himself was often defensive in tone. This was partly a consequence of the vicious assaults on his character and integrity that he suffered as Washington's secretary of the treasury from 1789 to 1795. The acknowledged young genius of the government, the fountainhead of most of Washington's own policies, Hamilton endured a ceaseless drumbeat of criticism from many quarters, particularly the Jeffersonian Republicans. His sometimes aberrant behavior, his readiness to dash off long essays for anonymous publication, his reckless charges against Jefferson, John Adams, and others—these cannot be understood apart from his feeling of being unjustly attacked himself, again and again, over a long period.

"Never was there a more ungenerous persecution of any man than of myself," he wrote in 1800. "Not only the worst constructions are put

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upon my conduct as a public man but it seems my birth is the subject of the most humiliating criticism." Certainly he had the most difficult childhood of any of the Founders. It is not even known for certain when or where he was born. The year was probably 1757, the place an island in the British West Indies, probably Nevis.

Hamilton's mother, Rachel Faucett, was a beautiful woman of French Huguenot descent. A native of Nevis, she had been married at sixteen to a middle-aged merchant named Johann Lavien and had moved to his home in St. Croix, one of the Danish Virgin Islands. After bearing a son, she left both husband and child and began living on the island of St. Kitts with James Hamilton, the ne'er-do-well fourth son of an aristocratic Scottish family. Rachel and James had two sons, of whom Alexander ("Elicks") was the younger. In 1765, when Elicks was about eight, the family moved to St. Croix. Shortly afterward, James Hamilton left the island and never again saw his family. Rachel, meanwhile, had been divorced by Johann Lavien, who had her briefly imprisoned for adultery. In 1768, Rachel died of typhoid fever, at the age of thirty-nine. Elicks, eleven, was now not only a bastard but effectively an orphan, and destitute.

But he was also supremely talented. In sheer drive and ability, few if any figures in American political history surpass Alexander Hamilton. Denied the affection of a close family circle, indeed of much real childhood at all, he developed in his early teens a habit of focused, unremitting work. None of the other Founders had greater powers of concentration. None allowed himself so little leisure. None had quite his insatiable appetite for work. And none except Franklin started so young.

At about the age of ten, Elicks was hired by the St. Croix branch of Beekman and Cruger, prominent New York–based merchants. Like many other Caribbean traders, they did a lively import-export business centered around the sugar economy. Young Hamilton worked in the firm until his middle teens. In the process, he absorbed valuable lessons about bookkeeping, money and credit, scheduling, inventory control, short-term finance, and the pricing of goods for sale. Again with the exception of Franklin, he was the only one of the Founding Fathers to have this kind of business experience at such an impressionable age; and he had a good deal more of it than did Franklin, though he lacked the older man's exposure to Europe.

Working in the Cruger mercantile house, he was propelled quickly into adulthood. During his bosses' frequent absences, the fourteen-year-old Elicks issued stern instructions to ship captains in the firm's employ:

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St. Croix Nov. 16, 177[1]

By all means take in a large supply of provender. Remember you are to make three trips this Season & unless you are very diligent, you will be too late as our Crops will be early in.

St. Croix Febru 1, 177[2]

Reflect continually on the unfortunate Voyage you have just made and endeavour to make up for the considerable loss therefrom accruing to your Owners.

Even before this, when Hamilton was twelve but already a little weary of clerking, he wrote a letter to his young friend Edward Stevens that captures his precocious self-awareness and drive. Of all his surviving letters, this is the one most revealing of his character:

Ned, my Ambition is prevalent that I contemn the grov'ling and condition of a Clerk or the like, to which my Fortune &c. condemns me and would willingly risk my life tho' not my Character to exalt my Station. I[']m confident, Ned that my Youth excludes me from any hopes of immediate Preferment nor do I desire it, but I mean to prepare the way for futurity. I[']m no Philosopher you see and may be justly said to Build Castles in the Air. My Folly makes me ashamd and beg you[']ll Conceal it, yet Neddy we have seen such Schemes successfull when the Projector is Constant[.] I shall Conclude saying I wish there was a War.

In good time, Elicks would get his war and would make the most of it.

III

When Hamilton was a boy, St. Croix had a population of about twenty-four thousand, more than 90 percent of whom were black slaves. The island, only eighty-two square miles in extent, was mostly given over to sugar plantations. (Tourists arriving in St. Croix today land at Alexander Hamilton Airport.) The capital city of Christiansted, where Elicks lived, contained about thirty-five hundred people. There were a few Danish officials, Denmark having acquired the island from France in 1733; but most of the whites were of English and Scottish descent. So Elicks grew up speaking English but, like many West Indians, learned French as well.

There is no record that Hamilton had much formal schooling in St. Croix. He was mostly self-taught. In addition to a gift for writing, he had a remarkably deep conceptual intelligence, plus a quick and cold-blooded facility with numbers. For several years during his teens he intended to follow his friend Ned Stevens into medicine, and to the end of his life he liked to prescribe for friends and family. (On

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the dueling field in 1804, he immediately diagnosed as mortal his wound from Burr's bullet.)

In the eighteenth century, as today, it was the practice in the West Indies to send upper-class or gifted youths to Europe or North America for their education. Elicks, of course, had no family or private means. It is not clear how many sponsors contributed to his coming to North America, but they included the Reverend Hugh Knox, a radical, long-winded Presbyterian who had guided his reading, and Hamilton's older cousin Ann Mitchell. The Crugman mercantile connection also helped.

Bearing letters of introduction to some prominent New York and New Jersey families, the fifteen-and-a-half-year-old Hamilton sailed to North America in October 1772. Hugh Knox's friend William Livingston welcomed him as a temporary resident in his own mansion at Elizabethtown, New Jersey. Elicks studied briefly at a nearby Presbyterian school, tried unsuccessfully to get into Princeton, then enrolled as one of seventeen new students admitted to King's College (later Columbia University) in the fall of 1773. He was not a regular member of the class but worked as a private student of anatomy, Latin, and mathematics. At King's library, as his biographer Jacob Cooke reports, "he became acquainted with Pufendorf, Grotius, Berlamqui, Hobbes, Locke, Montesquieu, Blackstone, Plutarch, Postlethwayt, and Hume." The last five figured regularly in his writings for many years afterward.

During his first year at King's College, the major events in the American colonies were the Boston Tea Party and, in response to it, the British Coercive Acts. In 1774, the First Continental Congress took retaliatory non-importation measures against the British, and the battle for public opinion began to boil. Hamilton, now almost eighteen, eagerly joined in the pamphlet wars. In December 1774, he published a fourteen-thousand-word essay entitled *A Full Vindication of the Measures of the Congress,* an impressive but not astonishing debut. Two months later, he followed with a longer, more analytically mature, and much more powerfully argued piece entitled *The Farmer Refuted.* This new pamphlet was written in response to an attack on Congress's aggressive stance published over the signature of "An American Farmer." Hamilton's rejoinder came close to a full justification for decisive action against British colonial policy. It would have done credit to a learned writer with theoretical training and practical experience in politics. Coming from an unschooled eighteen-year-old, it was quite a performance. And the war Hamilton had wished for was now only two months away.

After years of simmering, the Revolution exploded on the fields of Lexington and Concord in April 1775. An exuberant Hamilton began

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drilling daily with other volunteers in the yard of St. George's Church in lower Manhattan. Later in the year he helped in the evacuation of cannon from the Battery, and in that action he came under British fire. In January 1776, New York's Provincial Congress ordered that an artillery company be organized for the defense of the city, and soon Hamilton received his appointment as a captain. He did not see much action, but he made such a strong impression on his superiors that two major generals asked him to be their aide-de-camp. He declined because he wanted to achieve glory in combat. But early in 1777, George Washington himself requested his services, and this was an offer Hamilton could not refuse.

He was one of thirty-two junior officers who served as Washington's aides at one time or another during the eight years of war, and he was far and away the most talented. (Another of the junior officers was Aaron Burr, whom Washington disliked and who did not last long.) The only one of the aides who did not belong to an established colonial family, Hamilton became for three-and-a-half years part of the general's own "family," as the headquarters unit was called. Members of the family bunked in tents or in commandeered houses, eating together, working in close quarters, seeing each other constantly. Washington maintained an immense correspondence, with scores of messages daily into and out of his headquarters. Hamilton, a quick and articulate draftsman, wrote hundreds of these messages and orders. He developed a knack for anticipating Washington's wishes. He adapted his own prose to the precise and business-like style favored by the general.

As time went by, he grew as close to Washington as it was possible for a person to become. Doubtless he sensed something of the father he never had, and the childless Washington reciprocated in kind. On the other hand, given the upheavals of Hamilton's childhood, he was resolved to avoid relying on anyone besides himself. His chip-on-the-shoulder independence led to one bitter quarrel with the general over a trivial slight. As for Washington himself, even if he had been exceptionally warmhearted, which he was not, he could hardly allow himself to be seen as playing favorites. Circumspection, therefore, was maintained on both sides. Even so, the Washington-Hamilton relationship remained unusually close from 1777 until Washington's death in 1799. During this critical twenty-two-year period, it underlay what was perhaps the most productive collaboration in the history of American statecraft.

The two men perfectly complemented each other. Washington possessed the universal respect, maturity of judgment, and commanding physical presence lacking in Elicks, the impetuous wunderkind.

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For his part, Hamilton brought a resourceful, innovative intelligence, an almost incandescent genius, that the sobersided Washington needed and knew just how to use. Unlike many other brilliant people, Hamilton always thought strategically. He dwelled on the big picture. Among Washington's aides it was always he who received (or sought out) assignments such as planning for systematic new regulations, for a reorientation of the inspector general's office, and, most remarkably, for the reorganization of the entire army.

All of this, of course, was heady stuff for a penniless, illegitimate West Indian orphan barely out of his teens. Yet Hamilton blossomed. He seemed able to do anything. He dealt routinely with public affairs at the highest levels. In an age unfamiliar with the elements of complex management, he proved a superlative administrator. He seemed instinctively to know how to run things. He issued orders to generals in the same tone he had used with Caribbean ship captains. As the ranking French speaker on Washington's staff, he negotiated with the interminable stream of presumptuous officers from France who showed up demanding to be placed at the head of American troops. (He did become close friends with the Marquis de Lafayette, who was nine months younger than Hamilton himself.) He kept an alert eye on the behavior of Congress. Like Washington and most other military men, he became frustrated to the point of distraction by the dilatoriness at Philadelphia, the manifest ineptitude of the national government.

Most of all, Hamilton simply wrote—hundreds, ultimately thousands of pages: orders, letters, reorganization plans, essays on the strategic situation, speculative ideas for ways to finance the war, the occasional political tract. Seated at his desk day after day, the weeks turning into years, he wrote out in his smooth, plain script a huge body of paperwork that, by itself, comprises the outlines of a documentary history of the American Revolution. During his entire time in military service, as the biographer James Thomas Flexner has pointed out, he never took a furlough. The army had become home, Washington's "family" his own. There was no other place to go.

The one missing ingredient was the very thing that had led him to join the army in the first place: glory in battle. He wanted more than a desk job, even if his desk stood at the epicenter of the Revolution. Thus there began a protracted struggle with his chief, who was loath to lose his unmatched administrative talents. As he wrote Washington, many times he had explained "candidly my feelings with respect to military reputation, and how much it was my object to act a conspicuous part in some enterprise that might perhaps raise my character as a soldier above mediocrity." To understand how strongly

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Hamilton felt about this is to grasp the essence of his life. Now, and forever after, he was motivated by a passionate drive for "Fame," or what we would call immortality.

He did take part in a skirmish at Monmouth, unnecessarily risking his life, and he had a second horse shot from under him during a courier's mission. But his moment of real glory did not come until the very end of the war, after he had finally insisted on leaving Washington's "family" for good. At the Battle of Yorktown, the last big action of the war, he led a successful charge on a British redoubt, again exposing himself to fire for no essential purpose. This behavior suggested to some observers then, and to historians later on, that his thirst for Fame was mixed up with a death wish.

Yorktown effectively ended the Revolutionary War. Satisfied with his measure of glory, Hamilton left the army. One of his last acts was to renounce, as he wrote Washington, "all claim to the compensations attached to my military station during the war or after it"—a reference to the entitlement of half pay for life that officers in the Continental army had been awarded by Congress. It is not clear why Hamilton did this. Perhaps he wanted to put the army behind him symbolically. Perhaps, because the war was not formally over, he felt bad about leaving, as his letter to Washington hinted. But he certainly could have used the money, having recently married and fathered a son. The gesture was typical of his rash temperament.

Despite Hamilton's habitual round-the-clock work routines, he cut a dashing figure in society. He carried his slight frame with a ramrod bearing. The irascible John Adams spoke of him as "the Bloody Buoy," an allusion to his love of battle and his perpetually adolescent appearance. Hamilton was five feet seven and exceptionally slender, probably weighing no more than 125 pounds. With his reddish blond hair and light complexion, he continued to look like a juvenile even into his forties. He dressed like a dandy and had impeccable manners. While still in the army, he carried on a number of flirtations with a succession of young ladies, such as the aristocratic Catherine Livingston.

Perhaps because of his mother's disgrace, he had complicated feelings about women that were never completely resolved. Many times he went out of his way to help women who seemed to be in trouble. Some of them, it turned out, were exploiting his well-known gallantry for their own purposes: for example, the very clever Peggy Shipton Arnold (wife of the traitor Benedict Arnold), whose false tales of her own betrayal reduced the young Hamilton to jelly.

Hamilton's brief but intense extra-marital affair with Maria Reynolds, a beautiful twenty-three-year-old swindler, remained the most notorious liaison of its kind in the history of American politics

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until the aftermath of the Kennedy administration some 175 years later. It produced an immense harvest of contemporary gossip. It damaged Hamilton's reputation permanently. During the height of the scandal in the late 1790s, the acerbic President Adams wrote that Hamilton had "as debauched morals as old Franklin." The younger man's boundless ambition, Adams surmised, could be traced to a "superabundance of secretions" that he "could not find whores enough to draw off." (Of the many Hamilton biographies, the ones by James Thomas Flexner, Noemie Emery, and Jacob Cooke are strongest on psychological dimensions.)

Adams's judgment on this question was completely inappropriate and wrong, revealing more about himself than about Hamilton. There is no evidence, and not much reason to believe, that Hamilton ever strayed except with Maria Reynolds. He was a devoted husband and father, deeply in love with his wife Betsey, the younger daughter of General Philip Schuyler, an upstate New York patroon and head of one of the most prominent families in North America. It was an ideal match for Hamilton, not only because his love was genuine but also because the Schuyler connection gave him a social standing that he could have attained in no other way. Miss Schuyler was wealthy, but Hamilton's extreme sense of independence required that he never take a penny of her money. It also required that she herself understand his situation. As he wrote to her shortly before the marriage: "Do you soberly relish the pleasure of being a poor man[']s wife? Have you learned to think of a home spun preferable to a brocade and the rumbling of a waggon wheel to the musical rattling of a coach and six? . . . Your future rank in life is a perfect lottery."

Betsey Schuyler Hamilton helped her husband in a thousand ways. She indulged his mania for work, organized their household in a long succession of rented accommodations, and even took some of his dictation for *The Federalist Papers*. During the agonizing Reynolds affair of the 1790s she said nothing, though even a murmur from her would have ended Hamilton's career. She bore eight children, endured the deaths of both her husband and oldest son in senseless duels, and acted with courage and dignity throughout her life. Of the entire Revolutionary generation, she survived longest. In Washington, D.C., as late as the 1850s, she was still attending dinner parties, looking after her husband's reputation a half-century after his death, when she herself was past ninety. Marrying her was one of the wisest things Hamilton ever did.

After the Battle of Yorktown and Hamilton's departure from the army, he and Betsey went to Albany, where he began to study law. In the state of New York, the privilege of practice was restricted to men

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who had passed the bar, a step that normally came after a three-year clerkship as an apprentice to an established lawyer. Because Hamilton was seeking to avoid the required apprenticeship, it was necessary for him somehow to master the complex procedures of New York courts. To do this, he began one of his crash programs of study, and in the process of organizing his notes, he produced the first manual of civil procedure ever written in the United States. It ran to seventy printed pages, and for years thereafter was used by innumerable law students.

In November 1782, he wrote Lafayette, "I have been employed for the last ten months in rocking the cradle [of his and Betsey's new son] and studying the art of fleecing my neighbours. I am now a Grave Counsellor at law, and shall soon be a grand member of Congress." Within a year he had moved his family to lower Manhattan and set up a law office in his house at 57 Wall Street. With so much history already behind him, he was still just twenty-six. For the next five years, he pursued a lively law practice, while participating heavily in New York politics and the affairs of Congress at Philadelphia.

IV

After Hamilton began to attend sessions of the Continental Congress, he wrote to Washington describing the situation within the legislature. "There are two classes of men Sir in Congress of very Different views," he reported, "one attached to state, the other to Continental politics. The last have been strenuous advocates for funding the public debt upon solid securities, the former have given every opposition in their power." The delegates who emphasized the emerging national interest more than loyalty to their states, Hamilton concluded, were "in a word . . . the men who think continentally."

Nobody thought more continentally than did Hamilton himself. As he wrote in 1782 in one of his pamphlets, "There is something noble and magnificent in the perspective of a great Federal Republic, closely linked in the pursuit of a common interest, tranquil and prosperous at home, respectable abroad; but there is something proportionably diminutive and contemptible in the prospect of a number of petty states." By the time Hamilton reached his middle twenties, his fundamental political and economic ideas had already matured. There is not much in *The Federalist Papers* of 1788 or in his great *Reports* of the 1790s that was not foreshadowed in his writings of a decade before. Because these ideas were so important to the policies he promoted in the early 1790s as the architect of the early American economy, it is worthwhile to take a close look at their evolution during the years 1779–1782.

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They concerned four interrelated subjects: economics, politics, the optimal nature of the American union, and the kind of conscious national strategy that would best achieve it. Hamilton relentlessly sought to work out the precise set of policies that would direct the natural currents of economics and politics to the nationalist ends he envisioned.

During the 1770s and 1780s, the situation confronting all would-be designers of policy was the problem of a new nation emerging from a colonial past. There had never before been a successful revolution against a mother country. There was no precedent, no template, no obvious series of steps to take. The Declaration of Independence was an eloquent manifesto, but it was not a plan for governing, nor even for the definition of a nation. The words used in the Declaration—*"These United Colonies"—were a little misleading. The states continued* to have separate governments. Some had their own tariffs. Even under the Articles of Confederation, which were not ratified by the requisite number of states until six years after the battles of Lexington and Concord, the national government consisted almost solely of Congress. There was no executive branch, no federal court system. There was no unambiguous power to tax, none to regulate interstate trade. No bureaucracy existed. Congress and the army were mostly dependent on the individual states for funds and the other trappings of legitimate government.

The states themselves were so radically diverse in size and population (tiny Rhode Island versus mighty Virginia), and economy (shipping in Massachusetts, plantation staples under a slave regime in South Carolina) as to make a coordinated economic strategy impossible. Even individual states were at odds within themselves. Hamilton's own New York was divided between the emerging Manhattan metropolis and the Dutch estates of the Hudson Valley. Then there was the vexing question of foreign relations. Throughout the war, a good deal of trading with the enemy went on. The British army in North America, the largest expeditionary force in human history up to that time, had to be fed, and it conducted a regular business with the erstwhile colonists in North America, some of whom profited handsomely. Most other Americans, accustomed to subsistence and plantation agriculture and to a vigorous maritime trade with Britain and the West Indies, found these economic patterns disrupted.

What the ex-colonists hoped for was some form of free trade. They wished to move beyond the exclusivity of imperial mercantilism. They particularly wanted open markets in Europe and the West Indies. In April of 1776, the Continental Congress dramatically ended traditional mercantilistic restrictions by opening American ports to the

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ships of all countries. As the historian Drew McCoy has argued, this was a radical step, rooted in military exigency but also in revolutionary idealism. But free trade failed to materialize. The great powers of Europe were not about to abandon their closed imperial systems. As a result, American commerce was simply bottled up, shut out from some of its best markets. Throughout the 1770s and 1780s and well into the 1790s, the whole problem of foreign trade remained unsettled in America. It taxed the minds of all the Founders. Its seeming intractability made the long-term success of this first colonial revolution problematical in the extreme. It affected the livelihood of every commercial center in North America. It showed up for the country as a whole in a series of balance-of-payments crises that seemed to become worse with each passing year. An adverse trade balance meant a chronic outflow of specie and in turn a steady downward pressure on the money supply. At several points during the 1780s, it meant general economic depression. And since the country was not yet a nation in anything but name, it inevitably meant the danger of political disintegration—of a stillborn United States of America.

The war itself had cost about $160 million, an immense amount of money at that time, especially considering the small size of the country. (It was more than the total expenditures of the future national government over the first twenty years of its existence, from 1790 to 1810.) Per capita military and civilian casualties, the historian John R. Nelson argues, were probably greater than in any other American conflict except the Civil War. Economic disruptions were severe, especially in New York and the southern colonies, where most of the fighting took place. By late 1779, unreimbursed confiscations by the Continental army had become unavoidable, and this made the disruptions much harder for citizens to endure. Even after the war was won, the external economy was still tied to the British Empire. Between 1787 and 1792, more than 90 percent of all manufactured goods imported into the United States came from Great Britain. Meanwhile, the export trade stagnated. Overall shipments remained down. As against the incoming flood of British imports, only 43 percent of American exports went to Britain and its empire; 25 percent went to the French Empire, 10 percent to the Dutch Empire, 8 percent to the Spanish Empire, 6 percent to the Portuguese Empire. At none of these destinations were American traders as welcome as they wished to be. In none were they selling nearly as much as they could have in the absence of imperial restrictions. Nor, back home, could the states agree on what to do about it. Sectionalism remained a baffling problem for public policy. Continued political unity was not a foregone conclusion.

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For generations, historians argued that the decade of the 1780s either was or was not a "critical period." But recent research suggests that it was a very grave time indeed. John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard in their authoritative work, *The Economy of British America, 1607–1789*, conclude that "if the results of current research stand future scrutiny, something 'truly disastrous' happened to the American economy between 1775 and 1790." General economic performance may have fallen between 40 and 50 percent, an amount comparable to that experienced during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Certainly a disastrous outcome to the crisis was not beyond the imagination of Alexander Hamilton. A pessimist from experience, he knew from his own tragic boyhood that things could fall apart on short notice. He had seen during the war, from his special vantage point at headquarters, how everything that could possibly go wrong often did. Soldiers weren't paid. Supplies failed to materialize. There was nothing to wear. Troops went home in disgust. Congress issued paper money that quickly became worthless. The government was impotent. "Our countrymen," he wrote his friend John Laurens, "have all the folly of the ass and all the passiveness of the sheep in their compositions. . . . Don't think I rave; for the conduct of the states is enough most pitiful that can be imagined."

With the American economy in shambles, the question was how to organize for recovery and long-term growth, given the dystrophy of government under the Articles of Confederation. Hamilton's own approach was set forth in a series of letters and articles written during a brief period from 1780 through 1782. In these documents (their total length is equivalent to a small book), he laid out in systematic fashion both a diagnosis of the American situation and a prescription for its reform. His thinking is perhaps best summarized in a seven-thousand-word letter he wrote on September 3, 1780, to James Duane, a delegate to the Continental Congress who had asked for his views. Considering that the war was not yet over and the Constitutional Convention was still seven years in the future, the letter seems remarkably prescient. At the time of its writing, Hamilton was still Washington's aide-de-camp:

To James Duane [Liberty Pole, New Jersey, September 3, 1780]

The fundamental defect is a want of power in Congress. . . . The idea of an uncontrolable [*sic*] sovereignty in each state, over its internal [policy], will defeat the other powers given to Congress, and make our union feeble and precarious. . . . Without a speedy change the army must dissolve; it is now a mob, rather than an army, without clothing, without pay, without provision, without

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morals, without discipline. We begin to hate the country for its neglect of us; the country begins to hate us for our oppression of them. . . .

Congress should have complete sovereignty in all that relates to war, peace, trade, finance, and to the management of foreign affairs, . . . of regulating trade, determining with what countries it shall be carried on, granting indulgencies laying prohibitions on all the articles of export or import, imposing duties granting bounties & premiums. . . .

The second step I would recommend is that Congress should instantly appoint the following great officers of state—A secretary for foreign affairs—a President of war—A President of Marine—A Financier—A President of trade. . . .

The only certain manner to obtain a permanent paper credit is to engage the monied interest immediately in it by making them contribute the whole or part of the stock and giving them the whole or part of the profits.

Little in Hamilton's systematic program of the 1790s was not foreshadowed in this letter of 1780.

During the same period, he wrote a series of six newspaper essays collectively entitled "The Continentalist." He was still only twenty-three, but it may be seen how expertly he mixes economic theory, as it was then understood, with the application of policy to economic affairs:

There are some, who maintain, that trade will regulate itself, and is not to be benefitted by the encouragements, or restraints of government. Such persons will imagine, that there is no need of a common directing power. This is one of those wild speculative paradoxes, which have grown into credit among us, contrary to the uniform practice and sense of the most enlightened nations. . . .

To preserve the ballance [*sic*] of trade in favour of a nation ought to be a leading aim of its policy. The avarice of individuals may frequently find its account in pursuing channels of traffic prejudicial to that ballance, to which the government may be able to oppose effectual impediments. . . . The contrary opinion, which has grown into a degree of vogue among us, has originated in the injudicious attempts made at different times to effect a REGULATION OF PRICES. It became a cant phrase among the opposers of these attempts, that TRADE MUST REGULATE ITSELF. . . . In this sense the maxim was reasonable; but it has since been extended to militate against all interference by the sovereign. . . .

General principles in subjects of this nature ought always to be advanced with caution; in an experimental analysis there are found such a number of exceptions as tend to render them very doubtful; and in questions which affect the existence and collective happiness of these states, all nice and abstract distinctions should give way to plainer interests and to more obvious and simple rules of conduct.

In "The Continentalist" of 1782, as in his famous *Report on Manufactures* written a decade later, Hamilton was speaking in conscious and direct opposition to the theory and prescriptions of laissez faire contained in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776.

By nature Hamilton was most at home as a staff executive, an

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administrator. His disposition ran far more to action than to prolonged discussion. He was particularly frustrated by the fecklessness of the Continental Congress, and during his two years' service there, he never took a prominent part. In Madison's notes of the proceedings, he is recorded as disliking "every plan that made but partial provision for the public debts; as an inconsistent & dishonorable departure from the declaration made by Congs. on that subject." He was forever chafing for something more, agitating for a definitive engagement of the new nation's problems. He became a key player in organizing the Convention at Philadelphia in 1787, yet he played only a minor role in the great adventure of drafting the Constitution. Although now thirty years of age, he still showed the wunderkind's jitters with drawn-out proceedings.

From time to time he also exhibited a candor bordering on indiscretion. Had the meetings at Philadelphia not been closed to the press and public, some of his remarks praising the British and attacking American state governments might have ended his political career. As the convention began to drag into its second month, Hamilton became impatient with the inability of some of the delegates to look beyond states' rights and start to think continentally. On one very hot day in mid-June of 1787, he rose to speak on this subject and proceeded to hold forth for more than five hours. Here is Madison's record of what Hamilton said on that day:

> In his private opinion he had no scruple in declaring, supported as he was by the opinions of so many of the wise & good, that the British Govt. was the best in the world: and that he doubted much whether any thing short of it would do in America. . . .
>
> [On the proposed tenure of office of the Senate and President of the United States, he said:] Let one branch of the Legislature hold their places for life or at least during good behaviour. Let the Executive also be for life.
>
> [Hamilton] sees the Union dissolving or already dissolved—he sees evils operating in the States which must soon cure the people of their fondness for democracies.
>
> All communities divide themselves into the few and the many. The first are the rich and well born, the other the mass of the people. The voice of the people has been said to be the voice of God; and however generally this maxim has been quoted and believed, it is not true in fact. The people are turbulent and changing; they seldom judge or determine right. Give therefore to the first class a distinct, permanent share in the government. They will check the unsteadiness of the second, and as they cannot receive any advantage by a change, they therefore will ever maintain good government.

As sometimes happens with compelling orators, Hamilton had become caught up in his own rhetoric. It has never been certain that he completely believed or would have publicly stood by what he said in

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the secret proceedings; there are some significant differences between his remarks at the convention and what he wrote in *The Federalist* a few months later.

With little hope that the delegates would do the right thing, he left the Philadelphia Convention in late June of 1787 and stayed away for nearly six weeks. During this time he wrote Washington, who was presiding in Philadelphia and exasperated with Hamilton for leaving: "I am more and more convinced that this is the critical opportunity for establishing the prosperity of this country on a solid foundation. . . . There has been an astonishing revolution for the better in the minds of the people. The prevailing apprehension among thinking men is that the Convention, from a fear of shocking the popular opinion, will not go far enough."

Hamilton returned in August of 1787 and participated briefly in the remaining debates. When the final draft of the Constitution was ready, he insisted that all delegates sign it even though many, not least he himself, still had powerful reservations. The appearance of unanimity was critical for what lay ahead. As Hamilton understood better than most others, the battle in Philadelphia was now over, but the battle for ratification had hardly begun.

To this effort he contributed one of his lasting monuments, *The Federalist Papers*. With his allies Jay and Madison, he composed in almost white heat eighty-five essays that collectively analyzed and defended every part of the Constitution. The effort was addressed to public opinion in New York, where a flood of anti-Constitution propaganda had issued forth beginning in September of 1787. Hamilton wrote about two-thirds of the essays, and many of them show him at the very height of his rhetorical powers.

At the New York Ratifying Convention he took a conspicuous part, speaking long and often. Again his theme was that the new nation must be made to hang together or centrifugal forces would pull it apart. "We love our families, more than our neighbours: we love our neighbours, more than our countrymen in general. The human affections, like the solar heat, lose their intensity, as they depart from the center; and become languid, in proportion to the expansion of the circle, on which they act. On these principles, the attachment of the individual will be first and forever secured by the state governments." In consequence, the centripetal pull of the new Constitution must be supported as a countervailing force. If it weren't, the Union would disintegrate.

In the end, much to the surprise of most observers, New York ratified the Constitution by a narrow margin. Within a short time the required nine states affirmed the document, and it went into effect in

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1789. Hamilton's long quest for a workable national government now stood on the brink of achievement. The next steps would be administrative in nature. As secretary of the treasury he would come into his own as the nationalist par excellence, the major player in the drama about to unfold.

V

For many years Hamilton had believed that good administration demanded individual accountability. Although no direct evidence exists, there is some reason to believe that he helped draft the act of Congress that created the Treasury Department and gave its chief unusual latitude. The Secretary of the Treasury was going to be far more of an executive officer than a European-style finance minister. Hamilton saw himself almost as a prime minister to Washington's king-president. He sometimes wrote of "my administration" and "my commercial system."

He had a much larger staff than did the rest of the cabinet officers. (At this time there were only three others: Attorney General Edmund Randolph, Secretary of War Henry Knox, and Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson.) Hamilton's biographer Broadus Mitchell has calculated that the Secretary of the Treasury employed in his immediate office 39 staff members, including his assistant and 5 clerks. The auditor, who worked directly under Hamilton, had 12 clerks of his own. Jefferson's State Department had a total of 4 clerks and a messenger; Knox at the War Department only 3 clerks. Outside the capital city, Hamilton had charge of 297 inspectors and others who worked under the revenue collectors, plus 15 supervisors and 20 inspectors, 31 officers of the revenue cutters, 13 keepers of lighthouses, and assorted others. The total number under his supervision was 570. Almost the entire national civil government, such as it was in the 1790s, worked for Alexander Hamilton.

Of course, the American public sector remained minuscule compared to those of the European powers. Hamilton did an inordinate amount of work with his own hands. Numerous surviving state papers of this period are in Hamilton's own handwriting. A French visitor to the Treasury Department found the secretary sitting "in a long gray linen jacket" at an unadorned pine table covered with a green cloth. The visitor estimated that the entire furnishings of the office, where files lay on crude shelves, cost perhaps ten dollars.

What Hamilton cared most about was "energy" in government. *The Federalist Papers* are full of references to the need for activism, and the word *energy* occurs again and again. In one passage, he quotes his

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favorite poet, Alexander Pope: "Though we cannot acquiesce in the political heresy of the poet who says—'For forms of government let fools contest— / That which is best administered is best'—yet we may safely pronounce, that the true test of a good government is its aptitude and tendency to produce a good administration." This emphasis, the defining element in Hamilton's entire approach to government, contrasts strikingly with the themes evident in the writings of Jefferson. Where Hamilton extolled energy and administrative activism, Jefferson remained preoccupied with liberty, equality, the necessity for reflective leisure, and the virtues of agrarian living.

Of course, the question may properly be asked: Good and energetic administration toward what end? Here, as usual, Hamilton had an answer: the good of the nation. He was the quintessential national economic strategist. Better than any of the other Founders—in fact better than any other American of his generation who left enough records to judge—Hamilton saw how everything in the making of economic policy is related to everything else. In a remarkably modern way, he conceived policy in terms of aggregates. He thought not only continentally but macroeconomically as well.

Of the many students of Hamiltonian state building, one of the most penetrating is Willard Hurst, the foremost scholar of American legal history and himself the founding father of that sub-discipline. Hurst's work focuses on economic policy making through the shaping of the legal system. His comments highlight Hamilton's differences with Jefferson and Adam Smith, both of whom emphasized individualism in politics and consumption in economics. Hamilton stressed nationalism in politics and production in economics. As Hurst puts it:

> [Hamilton's] concern was almost exclusively with promoting overall capacity to produce goods and services. Conversely, he showed almost no concern with the quantity or quality of consumer satisfactions. . . . So far as he took account of consumption functions in the economy it was only in ways which underlined his preoccupation with production. . . . His official recommendations dealt with the condition of the factors of production appraised as wholes—the labor supply, the available stock of investment capital, the sum of farm production. . . . Aptly for his prime interests, he focused his analysis of public policy on what he termed "aggregate" concerns of commerce and industry.

Hamilton, a first-class student of administration, saw that not everything could be done at once. It was necessary to follow a particular sequence, a planned step-by-step strategy. That is what he now proceeded to do as Washington's Secretary of the Treasury.

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VI

As a teenaged pamphleteer, Hamilton had derided Britain's huge national debt: "Luxury has arrived to a great pitch; and it is an universal maxim that luxury indicates the declension of a state. Her subjects are loaded with the most enormous taxes. . . . With all their present resources, they would not be able to discharge the public debt, in less, than *one hundred and twelve years*, should the peace continue all that time." Yet Hamilton came to change his mind. In 1781, six years after lampooning the British debt in his pamphlet, he wrote Robert Morris: "A national debt if it is not excessive will be to us a national blessing; it will be powerfull cement of our union. It will also create a necessity for keeping up taxation to a degree which without being oppressive, will be a spur to industry."

The ambivalence evident in Hamilton's about-face reflects the eighteenth century's mixed attitude toward the subject of credit. As the historian Julian Hoppit has observed, even in Britain credit was often construed as a moral issue, and the verdict was usually negative. Many critics associated personal credit with usurious pawnbroking. Commercial credit was seen as encouraging wild projects and leading to ruin. And government-associated "public credit" was perhaps worst of all. It seemed dangerous on many counts: making it possible to fight unjust wars with borrowed money, forcing an unfairly high tax rate, promoting corruption in the legislature, enriching dishonest financiers who traded on inside information.

The agrarian bias of most Americans caused them to look askance at credit. Debt was seen as compromising one's independence. Benjamin Franklin often railed against it in *Poor Richard's Almanack* ("He that goes a borrowing goes a sorrowing"). The plantation South held very hostile views toward commercial and public credit. Because of the seasonal nature of farming, planters were forever borrowing to get from the spring and summer to the fall harvest. Yet, in the eyes of such Virginians as James Madison, credit was a diabolical tool used by British tobacco factors to divert American trade from its "natural channels."

When Hamilton entered office and addressed the question of American public credit, he was pushing against heavy adverse forces, made worse by the peculiar nature of the public debt. It was a huge and motley concoction of paper instruments. To holders of the many different kinds of bills and securities issued by the Continental Congress during the 1770s and 1780s, the national government owed $29 million principal plus $11.4 million in back interest. To French and

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Dutch creditors who had helped finance the Revolution, the government owed almost $12 million, including about $1.8 million of arrears in interest. The debts owed by the individual states were of indeterminate amounts. Hamilton estimated them at about $25 million, but they proved to be a little less.

The actual sum of all federal and state debt was $75.4 million, at face value. This worked out to less than $25 per person—not much, apparently, in comparison with today's per capita federal indebtedness of more than $16,000. But the annual income of the national government during the 1790s was only about $5 million, a mere one-fifteenth of the national debt. In the early 1990s, the annual income of the federal government was about $1 trillion, or a much healthier one-fourth. But there is really no satisfactory way to compare these numbers. The whole basis of the American economy was fundamentally different in the 1790s, since most people worked most of the time at subsistence agriculture, a cashless economy. The fact is that a national debt of $75 million was so large that paying it seemed impossible.

The actual market value of the debt could not be determined with precision, but, as the historian E. James Ferguson has shown, it was very much less than the sum of the face value of all outstanding instruments. Congress had issued paper money, loan certificates, "indents" (promises in lieu of interest payments), and a variety of other notes, to all kinds of creditors: foreign bankers, wealthy American merchants, Revolutionary War soldiers, military contractors, farmers, and craftsmen. Some of these debts carried clearly defined interest rates and maturities. Many did not. On the open market, a few cents on the dollar would have sufficed to purchase many types of securities, perhaps fifty cents on the dollar for some others, and par value for practically nothing except a portion of the foreign debt.

As the new government took office in 1789, nobody knew by just how much, if at all, the debt should be scaled down to reflect the country's ability to pay. It remained unclear whether any of the principal was to be paid, and, if so, when. No one knew what interest rates should be applied in case all or part of the debt were to be refinanced. Nor did anyone know what would be done about the state debts. Throughout the 1780s, Hamilton and other nationalists had argued that the federal government should take priority over the states in its claim on the taxing power. Following this logic, he and his allies (men such as Robert Morris) had resolutely opposed plans of the individual states to pay off their own debts. Reasoning that the power to tax was an indispensable element of national sovereignty, they wanted to preserve all debts, state-incurred ones included, until

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such time as the national government gained the power and resources to fund them. "Funding" meant providing for the payment of interest, not necessarily of principal as well.

By 1789, this argument between nationalists and advocates of power for the states had been going on for well over a decade. The Federal Constitution of 1787 represented a big victory for the nationalists, but actual implementation of a nationalist fiscal policy was something else again. In the short and medium term, there was no conceivable way to pay the principal on any of the debt, except through another huge borrowing and rollover.

Here is what Hamilton did to meet this extraordinary situation. He recommended, and after seven months' debate Congress passed, legislation providing for:

1. A complex plan to consolidate all domestic debts of the national government and refund them at par (that is, pay interest on their face value, while leaving unclear when the principal would be repaid). Hamilton decided to reduce the overall interest rate by about one-third, which meant a huge reduction in the amount the government had to pay. In order to justify this move, and so as to avoid continuing strife over annual appropriations, he suggested that import duties be earmarked for paying interest on the debt. This earmarking provision proved to be crucial for reassuring creditors and strengthening future public credit.

2. Assumption by the federal government of the entire war debts of the states and funding of those debts, too, at par.

3. Immediate payment of the foreign debt and arrears of interest by means of another foreign loan.

4. Payment of interest in specie. Given the shortage of hard money in North America, this provision was in some ways the most radical and unexpected element of Hamilton's entire plan.

5. A sinking fund providing at least some monies for the eventual extinguishment of the debt.

Of these elements, the first and second listed above became extremely controversial. While nearly everyone in Congress agreed that something had to be done about public credit, members were divided on whether to refund the federal debt at par and whether to assume the debts of the states. On the first question, critics angrily pointed out that the market value of outstanding securities was nowhere near their face value. Funding the new debt at par therefore seemed to be the equivalent of the Treasury's making a huge and thoroughly pointless donation to speculators. So there was much talk in favor of "discrimination": preferential treatment for original holders of the debt. These original holders were portrayed as deserving contributors to

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the war effort, in contrast to speculators who had bought up the certificates at a small fraction of face value.

Hamilton, who could foresee the administrative nightmare that discrimination would entail, opposed it on principle anyway because he wished to establish the nation's credit on the soundest possible basis. He very much wanted to tie "the monied interest" to the new government, and funding the debt at par would do this. It was a basic goal of the nationalists; and Hamilton was incredulous when the leader of the discrimination movement in Congress turned out to be James Madison, his longtime ally, fellow nationalist, and *Federalist* collaborator. Madison was beginning to pay more attention to his Virginia constituents, and he was honestly horrified by the prospect of rewarding speculators.

Objections to Hamilton's plan for refunding at par without discrimination were not confined to southerners. Because of the hostile attitudes toward debt and credit so widely held by the American people, negative responses were inevitable, and they appeared in many different forms. A typical complaint (recently unearthed by the historian Ruth Bogin), came from the pen of one William Manning, a self-taught farmer from Massachusetts, who diagnosed the problem as follows: "[T]he Grate Question is how Shall Restitution be Made & Justis Done in this Case when Nither Congress nor the States have Either Mony nor Credit to Do it with." Manning proposed that Congress redeem "their Domistick Securityes" not at par but at eight shillings to the pound. The remaining twelve shillings would go to original creditors. This would avoid the "Measures so Glareingly unjust" embraced by Hamilton's plan. The world, Manning went on to say, is divided between the wealthy few and the laboring many, and "their is nothing which excites Jelocye betwen these few & Many More than the alterations of Money affares."

Hamilton understood all of this only too well. "It is easy to perceive," he wrote a little later, "that such a heterogeneous mass of opinions not merely speculative but actuated by different interests and passions could not fail to produce embarrassment to the person who was to devise the plan." Time, however, was short. "Had a single session [of Congress] passed . . . without some adequate provision for the debt the most injurious consequences were to have been expected." But there was no perfect solution. Hamilton believed (and often said) that decisions simply had to be made, right or wrong. The task of the administrator was not to seek perfection but to find and execute the best alternative among lists of unattractive options.

In 1790, this proved to be especially true of the assumption issue. Hamilton's proposal that the national government assume state debts

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so outraged some members of Congress that his entire plan was endangered. Debate on assumption continued for month after month. On Hamilton's funding plan as a whole, Congress deliberated from February 8 to August 9, 1790, almost the entire session.

Despite the adamant opposition of James Madison, the ablest and most respected member of the First Congress, Hamilton held firm. Assumption of state debts was the keystone of his grand scheme to force the American "confederation" into a tighter union. The power to fund the debt of the Revolution carried the moral authority of first call on tax levies, and he was not about to let it slip into the hands of state governments. But Congress simply refused to go along. Hamilton had almost enough votes to pass his assumption bill, but not quite. Deadlock resulted.

After weeks of struggle, the logjam was finally broken by a famous bargain between Hamilton and the Jeffersonians. Under its terms the national capital, then in New York, would move to Philadelphia for ten years. Thereafter it would be relocated in the South, adjacent to Virginia along the Potomac River. In return, the Virginians would provide enough votes to swing the House of Representatives in favor of Hamilton's assumption bill. The bargain was consummated, the House members polled again. What had been 29 votes for, 33 against, was now reversed. Hamilton would have his assumption bill. And the national capital would be in a hot, muddy new city on the Potomac, fulfilling a long and, it had been thought, utterly impractical dream of George Washington himself.

The second part of Hamilton's master plan for the new American economy came in his *Report* proposing a new Bank of the United States. He had accurately identified the lack of an adequate money supply as one of the economy's main problems. The funding and assumption plans had created large blocks of new securities, which were quickly subscribed by domestic (and, increasingly over the next decade, foreign) investors. In effect, Hamilton had monetized the entire federal and state war debts, using a form of what economists later called "rational expectations" to convert debt securities into money. With his plan for a Bank of the United States, Hamilton proposed to facilitate this process. Far better than most of his contemporaries, he saw that a new money supply could simply be created out of government instruments, that a positive psychology of money was wrapped up with prospects for business confidence, and that both were essential for economic growth. Thus he was never persuaded by the vociferous Jeffersonian opposition that the profiteering of speculators was in itself sufficient reason not to fund the debt at par.

Hamilton's bank proposal triggered a bitter exchange with Jef-

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ferson, who appealed directly to Washington to stop the bank's incorporation on grounds of unconstitutionality. Hamilton's long and meticulous response to Jefferson's protest was so devastating that it made the rupture between the two cabinet officers permanent. It is, in fact, one of the most eloquent and closely argued state papers in American history. Almost thirty years later, it formed the basis for Chief Justice Marshall's landmark opinion in the case of *McCulloch v. Maryland* (1819), establishing broad implied powers under the Constitution.

So Hamilton got his bank, just as he had got his funding and assumption plans. He seemed to be conquering every obstacle. The American economy was beginning to boom, government securities were selling above par, and he was running circles around the opposition. At the end of his second year in office, late in 1791, he presented the most ambitious and far-reaching of all his state papers, the *Report on Manufactures.* This document represents, as the economist Joseph Schumpeter once wrote, " 'applied economics' at its best." The same might be said of Hamilton's three great reports as a group. The *Reports* on Public Credit, the Bank, and Manufactures total about ninety-five thousand words, the length of a medium-sized book. All three are models of lucid prose and clearheaded reasoning. Each is strikingly modern in its analytical framework.

The Report on Manufactures called for a full-blown industrial policy designed for a developing country. Unlike Jefferson (and Adam Smith, who also thought America should stick to farming), Hamilton was determined that the United States be more than an agrarian country. Although Congress never enacted the systematic program outlined in his *Report on Manufactures,* an unexpected series of events over the next three decades brought many of Hamilton's plans to fruition. Economic pressures deriving from the Napoleonic Wars, the embargo under President Jefferson, and the tariffs enacted by Congress in 1816 and the 1820s all had the effect of promoting commerce and, even more so, manufacturing. The overall result constituted just the kind of diversification of the American economy that Hamilton was aiming for.

Some of the most perceptive students of this issue, such as the biographer Forrest McDonald and the economists Richard Sylla and John James, have noted that Hamilton was almost alone in his modern understanding of the interdependence between present solvency and future prosperity. In the pivotal years 1790 and 1791, he had made a carefully calculated reciprocal wager. He had bet the viability of his monetary and fiscal system on the country's capacity for economic growth. And he had reinforced the potential for that growth with this very same system. Both bets came through in grand fashion.

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Hamilton's fiscal system lasted for many years. Until the income taxes of the twentieth century, most federal revenues came from customs duties, except during periods of war. (For the 1790s as a whole, customs provided well over 90 percent of federal income.) Until the national debt was temporarily extinguished during the 1830s, and again except for periods of war or preparation for war, interest payments almost always comprised the largest single use of federal revenues. The debt, which stood at $75.4 million in 1791, neither increased nor shrank very much until the foreign loan connected with the Louisiana Purchase increased it to $86.4 million in 1805. Under the Jefferson-Madison-Gallatin policies of retiring the debt quickly, it shrank to $45.2 million in 1813, only to shoot up to $119.6 million by 1815 because of the War of 1812. The size of the national debt in the United States has almost always been a function of war, including the Cold War.

Hamilton himself left office early in 1795, having endured enormous abuse from baseless charges that he had profited personally from his management of the Treasury Department—but also having seen most of "my commercial system" put firmly into place. It had all been a great adventure, a spectacular achievement of planning, execution, and administration. What his policies had done, in combination with events, was promote both short-term and long-term business confidence. In so doing, they had facilitated the release of immense economic energy in the private sector. They had helped to shape the distinctive American balance between political stability on the one hand and vast potential for economic growth on the other. They had made it plausible for entrepreneurs to think big thoughts and entertain risky new ventures. They had helped make it easier for energetic individuals, whatever their origins, to rise as Hamilton himself had done.

The historian Joyce Appleby, in *Capitalism and the New Social Order,* makes an interesting argument that this release of energy actually derived more from Jeffersonian individualism. She contends that the Federalist mind-set as exemplified by Hamilton and others was too upper-class in orientation to cause a broad release of energy throughout society. My own reading of the evidence is closer to the older views of Broadus Mitchell, John C. Miller, Bray Hammond, E. A. J. Johnson, Gerald Stourzh, and Willard Hurst, all of whom present powerful arguments for the wisdom and success of the Hamiltonian program. Drew R. McCoy, in *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America,* posits a modern, technology-oriented, interdependent Hamiltonian capitalism against a backward-looking Jeffersonian ideal of agrarianism mixed with rudimentary manufactures,

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leading to a household autarchy of the type Jefferson himself tried to create at Monticello. Burton Spivak, in *Jefferson's English Crisis*, sees a frustrated President Jefferson ultimately retreating into "an idealized and largely imaginary American economy" of self-sufficient isolationism. One of the broadest analyses of these issues, particularly of their political and social aspects, is Gordon S. Wood's *Radicalism of the American Revolution*, published in 1992. All of these books present sophisticated variations on the Hamilton-Jefferson split and its implications for the American polity.

VII

Because of the economic nature of his achievement, Hamilton as a statesman is best compared historically not with his contemporary rival Jefferson—the peerless apostle of political liberalism—but with the builders of modern economies in other countries at other times. He was the direct intellectual descendant of Jean Baptiste Colbert, the great French minister who devised a system for the promotion of manufactures during the reign of Louis XIV. He was a legatee also of Charles Montagu (later the Earl of Halifax), the Chancellor of the Exchequer who fashioned England's innovative strategy of public credit in the 1690s. In turn, Hamilton was himself an inspiration to Friedrich List, who envisioned and tirelessly promoted the German customs union, national railway network, and other measures leading to the eventual unification of the German Empire of 1871, long after List's own death. In breadth of vision and in sheer audacity, Hamilton invites comparison with Bismarck as well.

In Japan, the program of forced modernization carried out by the Meiji reformers of the late nineteenth century was almost purely Hamiltonian in its economics, though not in its repressive politics. Hamilton's *Report on Manufactures*, written nearly a century before, could have served as a blueprint for Japan's phenomenal leap into a modern industrial economy. Even the post–World War II Japanese economic miracle, based on a deliberate, focused development of competitive domestic manufacturing in selected strategic industries, was fundamentally Hamiltonian in its conceptualization and execution. So too with the more recent development of the economies of Korea and Taiwan.

In less successful examples of industrial planning and national finance—and there are legions of them—the departures from Hamiltonianism usually came in a failure to appreciate or act on the interconnectedness of things. In many countries, despite admirable progress on some fronts, there were very frequent failures to control public

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credit, as in Brazil during the post–World War II period. In other countries, problems arose when policies of import substitution turned into prolonged insulation and protectionism, as in the case of India during the 1970s and 1980s.

Taken together, these examples show conclusively that government promotion of economic development, in and of itself, provides neither a guarantee of success nor a recipe for disaster. As in most other kinds of human activity, the outcome depends on the wisdom of the action and the possibility of success in a particular set of circumstances. The practical lesson of Alexander Hamilton is that such success requires a combination of unusual talent and rare opportunity, but also that the possibility of great achievement exists if things are done right.

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Granddaughter and Ancestors

MARGARET KAY

. . . and sleep the long way home.
—Hart Crane, "Voyages"

This is the end of the day I promised you.
Early this morning I found the dirt road
off Route 1 and made the turn. You hang your
head out the window looking for the pear tree
that marks the path through the woods to their graves.

When we turn into the woods at the pear tree,
showers of blossoms descend on the Mickey
Mouse hat you insisted on wearing.
You lead the way to the shaded hollow
and squat before the bracken that grows

everywhere around the graves. You ask me
why we didn't bring some scissors to cut
the bracken. You push aside the broad, coarse
fronds and read aloud to me, proud of your
second-grade reading ability, the names

of the three who "rest at Jesus' side."
After you've read the "sleep, lovely babe" part
you are quiet. Mosquitoes buzz around
the Mickey Mouse hat. One settles on your
thin bare arm. Back in the car we return

to Route 1. The daisies and the buttercups you
gathered by the road near the pear tree
wilt and lie limp in your hand by the time

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we turn into the town cemetery
where all the graves have perpetual care.

Here the air is soft and still. Broad leaf trees
cast shadows on slanting stones. You wander
off to pick wild strawberries to perk up
your bouquet of buttercups and daisies.
Field crickets rub body parts together

and fill the air with their sad sweet song.
You scrape away the orange lichen
advancing upon the names of your forebears
and divide the daisies and buttercups
and the wild strawberries among the graves.

The burial ground on the island
is our last stop. While we wait for the ferry
you walk the pebbly beach looking for green
crabs. There are gulls brooding eggs on the island.
They stretch their necks and screech at us when we

get too near. Thorny bushes bar our way
to the graveyard. You want to crawl under
them but when a thorn stabs your finger you
give up. You fashion a circle of eelgrass
on the beach and fill it with sea lavender.

"For them," you say, "so they'll know we've been here."
Back on the ferry, you lean your head out
the window and watch the island disappear,
then lay your head on my lap and close your eyes.
This is the end of the day I promised you.

✪ MARGARET KAY received her bachelor's degree at the University of Massachusetts at Boston in 1989 at the age of seventy-one.

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Meditation in the Israelite Cemetery, Würzburg

NORBERT KRAPF

Site of silence
away from the center.

Place of profound
and sacred quiet
where few
are left to come.

Hush of sorrow
and sadness welling up
from the earth.

Hush of vine
and leaf and twig
of grass paying
their lush respect.

Silence in search
of restitution
and reparation.

Silence of stories
wanting to be told.

Affection of weed
wanting to curl
against stone

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where almost
no one of
the thousands
is left to lay
small stone
upon larger stone.

Silence of slow
and unending lament
and hope
evaporated like dew.

Silence of pink flowers
arranged to bloom
in the shape
of a star.

Silence of those
who were taken away
and had no one left
to have their names
cut in stone

but who returned
in spirit
nevertheless
from a place
to the East

with a beautiful
name which
nevertheless

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has come to
signify
the cruelest
of fates.

Silence of annihilation
and desecration.

Silence of those
who had to endure
the thought
of the unthinkable.

Silence of you,
Klara, whose
family took
my last name.

Whose name
I bless
and commemorate
with heavy words

I would lay
like stones
upon your tomb

which would have
stood here
had there been

anyone left
to remember.

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The Nobel Prize for Literature

RENEE WINEGARTEN

When Jorge Luis Borges was informed that his works were to be published in French translation in the prestigious and handsome Pléiade edition, he inquired teasingly, "It's better than the Nobel Prize, isn't it?" This was a wry allusion to the fact that the supersubtle Argentinian had not been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature—although he would seem to be a prime candidate for it as a disturbingly labyrinthine and internationally influential writer. Moreover, he had opposed the Peronist dictatorship and had been persecuted by it.

In a way, Borges was on the right track. To figure among the authors in the Pléiade edition is a consecration to be shared with Virgil, with Cervantes and Shakespeare, with Goethe, Dickens, Tolstoy and Proust. It is a more purely "literary" consecration, remote from national or political concerns, or the hint of establishment connections and celebratory flummery. Here is to be found the judgment of the ages as well as the wide (if not always unanimous) consensus of the moderns. Would the Nobel Prize for Literature have added an inch to Borges's stature? Has it indeed added to the literary stature of any of those who have received the award? All the same, it is commonly regarded as the highest prize or accolade to which writers throughout the world may aspire.

Literary prizes, especially for poetry or essays, have existed for centuries. Some were in the gift of the monarch or ruler, a reward for the expression of loyal sentiments. Often, in the past, a subject would be set by some literary academy and the candidates would submit their entries. All were usually dealing with the same theme, in similar form, and that must have lightened somewhat the burden on the judges. These traditional literary prizes could be relatively small, often provincial affairs. A modest sum might help to rescue a young prize-

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winner from starvation, or the victory itself might assist in confirming a reputation.

The proliferation of famous literary prizes would seem to be a phenomenon of the late nineteenth century and especially of the twentieth century, where such awards may well be quite richly endowed. The larger the financial reward, the greater the fascination in the press and on television, where literature is one more subject of gossip and chatter. The modern, much publicized literary prize endowed with a large financial reward introduces a competitive and philistine element into the literary or artistic enterprise, where it does not belong. "Writing is a voluntary activity," said the distinguished novelist V. S. Naipaul on winning a literary prize and a large sum. He added delicately, "The idea of becoming a writer in order to hit the jackpot is awful." In public at least, few novelists resemble Norman Mailer who once notoriously assessed his own standing in relation to his literary contemporaries. Certainly, it is enlightening to discriminate between Tolstoy and Dostoevsky (as demonstrated by George Steiner in a fine study); it is not unusual to prefer one to the other; but the very idea of selecting one rather than the other for a literary prize would be manifestly absurd and pointless. The primary aim of the poet, novelist, or dramatist, under strange compulsion to write in one particular way and no other, is a matter solely of art and artistry—or so it would appear to the literary purist. But then there are not many of those about nowadays, when the whole subject of literature is bedeviled by politics.

Not that the financial aspect of literary prizes in general is to be despised. William Butler Yeats did not look down on it. His first question on hearing that he was to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature is said to have been a blunt and practical "How much?" That is not quite what one might have expected of the poet of "Byzantium," versed in occultism and theosophy. The cash certainly enabled Albert Camus to buy a house, which he and his family loved, at Lourmarin in the South of France. That darkly satirical Spanish novelist Camilo José Cela, author of the grim *La Familia de Pascual Duarte*, suggested that he would use the money to pay his debts. The Nobel Prize for Literature may well have increased the sales of the prizewinner's books for a time, but as far as I know there do not seem to be any statistics to that effect.

Usually the Nobel Prize for Literature has gone to writers who are not (or not any longer) impecunious. By the time they receive it, they are well established and, in a number of instances, approaching their demise. An anonymous commentator in a wartime issue of the *Times Literary Supplement* of December 20, 1917, annoyed that the award had

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been made to a pro-German Danish writer, declared acidly: "It comes as a Christmas present every year to some very successful author, apparently on the principle that to him who hath more shall be given." George Bernard Shaw, who accepted the award while stating plainly that he did not believe in prizes for literature, and declining the cash, said that the Nobel Prize for Literature was "a life belt thrown to a swimmer who has already reached the shore." He was echoing Samuel Johnson who, on completing his *Dictionary* without Lord Chesterfield's patronage, and contemptuous of the noble lord's belated commendation in two essays in a fashionable journal, uttered the famous put-down: "I have sailed a long and painful voyage round the world of the English language, and does he now send out two cock-boats to tow me into harbour?"

Some have viewed the Nobel Prize for Literature as a kind of flower-bedecked burial. This was what one amiable French critic opined when Camus, who was going through a period of self-doubt and writer's block, received it. T. S. Eliot gloomily saw the award, which he accepted, as "a ticket to one's funeral." Nobody ever did anything afterwards, he reflected sourly. Doubtless those who write in English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Russian—languages that are most commonly translated internationally—scarcely need the prize to be widely known. In contrast, those figures who write in Serbo-Croatian (the Bosnian Serb novelist Ivo Andrić, author of *Bosnian Story* and *The Bridge on the Drina*), or in Arabic (the Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz with *The Cairo Trilogy—Palace Walk, Palace of Desire, Sugar Street*), do have the opportunity to reach a larger public.

Nonetheless, since the Nobel Prize for Literature was established in 1901, it has not saved from oblivion its first prizewinner, the poet Sully Prudhomme, and others who later caught the mood of their time (for instance, Pearl S. Buck, with her once-famous novel about China, *The Good Earth*). The Swedish Academy has frequently crowned second-rate and third-rate writers. Perhaps this seems inevitable, because we know how far from simple it is to distinguish the great and possibly obscure genius of one's own day from the modish author of talent. Besides, in many cases, judgment is being passed on the strength of translations, a particularly delicate matter in the realm of poetry. At the same time, the Swedish Academy has overlooked some of the greatest writers of the century, including Joseph Conrad, Henry James, Leo Tolstoy, Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Federico García Lorca, to name a few that spring immediately to mind. (It cannot be accused of failing to recognize Kafka, whose reputation was largely posthumous.)

Take the neglect of Tolstoy: why was he not selected? At the time

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of the foundation of the Nobel prizes he was commonly regarded as a literary giant, easily the world's greatest living writer both as novelist and as controversial sage. In short, he already occupied the place he has never really lost in world literature. Distinguished travelers to Russia did not want to leave without calling on the great man. On his birthday in 1908, seventeen hundred messages of congratulation poured in to Yasnaya Polyana.

Word had reached Tolstoy in 1897 from a seemingly impeccable source that the Nobel committee was thinking of him for the Nobel Prize, which was then being established. Tolstoy sent a letter to a Stockholm newspaper on August 29, 1897, proposing that the prize money should be given to the Doukhobors, members of an old Russian sect who (like himself) advocated non-resistance and who were being persecuted for refusing to serve in the armed forces. Deeply engaged in a public campaign on their behalf, he was to donate the author's rights to his novel *Resurrection* to enable the Doukhobors to emigrate to Canada. In Tolstoy's view, they had done far more than he for the cause of peace. From this observation, it seems clear that what Tolstoy had in mind was the Nobel Peace Prize rather than that for literature. Is it possible that the secretive Swedish Academy was put out because Tolstoy had, as it were, publicly jumped the gun?

When the first Nobel Prize for Literature was awarded to Sully Prudhomme in 1901, Swedish writers bemoaned the injustice in a letter to Tolstoy. On January 22, 1902, Tolstoy replied in French, informing them that he was really pleased at not receiving the award "because it has spared me the great problem of disposing of the money which, like all money, can only lead to evil, in my view." Given his earlier intense activity to obtain financial help for the Doukhobors, this was yet another example of his notorious self-contradiction.

In effect, the members of the Swedish Academy had from 1901 to November 1910, when Tolstoy breathed his last in the railway station at Astapovo, to make the award to him. That they did not do so, preferring a number of lesser and even mediocre figures, must remain one of the oddest enigmas in the history of the Nobel Prize for Literature. The episode reflects on the judges, of course, not on the object of their neglect. There is a sense in which Tolstoy, with his rare gift of conveying the feeling of life as it is lived, was above all that.

An egregious omission nearer our own day is that of the American Russian-born émigré novelist, Vladimir Nabokov. By the late 1960s, Nabokov was frequently lauded, especially in the United States, as the greatest living writer, who was bound to receive the Nobel Prize, for which he had been nominated. In 1969, a critic in the *New York Times*

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went so far as to declare: "If he doesn't win the Nobel Prize, it's only because the Nobel Prize doesn't deserve him." Doubtless Nabokov was too idiosyncratic a writer, absorbed in aesthetic values. As Alfred Kazin once observed, for Nabokov, art is its own excuse, a form of play. This was not an approach likely to appeal to the Nobel committee.

Much is explained by the way in which the Nobel Prize for Literature came about, the bases of its criteria, and the manner in which it has to be administered. As everyone knows, it was founded by the nineteenth-century Swedish inventor and industrialist, Alfred Nobel (1833-1896), along with prizes for physics, chemistry, medicine, and peace. Evidently, the prizes for medicine and science are less controversial than the prize for literature, since they can be awarded for a definite discovery or advance of a material kind that can be proved.

Alfred Nobel himself had discovered dynamite, which he patented in 1867. He was the son of a twice-bankrupt inventor who had experimented with explosives and had been honored by the czar. As for Alfred himself, he turned out to be an extremely shrewd businessman who made a fortune from the development of explosives, asserting (not surprisingly) that their main use was beneficial and especially constructive in civil engineering. What is perhaps less well known is that Alfred Nobel was also a frustrated writer. In his youth he composed autobiographical poems. In addition he wrote a tragedy after Shelley's *The Cenci*, as well as drafts for novels, among other literary efforts of a dramatic or satirical character. He traveled widely and could read and write in six languages, making translations from French and Russian. Presumably, Nobel's repressed literary aspirations, along with a possible tinge of guilty conscience, played some part in his munificence.

According to Alfred Nobel's will, one part of his bequest was to go to "the person who shall have produced in the field of literature the most outstanding work of an idealistic tendency." This looks like a characteristically early-nineteenth-century notion, current in Alfred Nobel's childhood, but already outdated in the period of disillusion that followed the failure of the revolution of 1848, the era of realism, positivism, and Darwinism. No wonder that Emile Zola, exponent of "naturalism" and of the ills of heredity, did not find favor with Alfred Nobel. Zola could scarcely pass for an idealist, despite his stand for justice in the Dreyfus Affair.

When the Nobel Prize for Literature was founded, it was doubtless too soon to be preoccupied with the question of perverted idealism, which would come to loom so large in the twentieth century. How to foresee that some of the leading writers of the age would be hostile to

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liberal parliamentary democracy? How to know that Knut Hamsun, the admired Norwegian author of *Hunger*, awarded the prize in 1920, would turn into a fervent supporter of the Nazis? Or that Yeats with his fascistic leanings might need W. H. Auden's odd form of exculpation (later excised). Certainly, by the time that T. S. Eliot was favored in 1948, his fondness for the proto-Fascist ideas of Action Française was well known. As for that masterly Sicilian dramatist, Luigi Pirandello, laureate of 1934, he was an admirer of Mussolini and a member of the Italian Fascist party, despite some differences with it. Pirandello favored Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia: in 1935, much to Swedish indignation, he gave his Nobel Prize gold medallion to be melted down for the imperialist cause. The whole question of idealism is problematic: an "idealistic tendency" is not a literary virtue. As has been well said, literature is not made with fine or right-thinking sentiments.

The perfect prizewinner from the idealist standpoint was perhaps the noted pacifist, Romain Rolland. He was crowned in 1915 for his desire for Franco-German reconciliation, expressed in his multivolume saga, *Jean-Christophe*—and well before his notorious fellow-traveling phase—"as a tribute to the lofty idealism of his literary presentation." Yet idealism as such was inevitably a casualty of the holocaust of the 1914–18 war and of Freud. The need to find idealistic grounds for the award became more of a problem over the years and it has led to some strange contortions. Thus the citation for Samuel Beckett, with his death-haunted view of life from the dustbin, runs: "For his writing, which—in new forms for the novel and drama—in the destitution of modern man acquires its elevation." This meaningless verbiage enables one to appreciate the difficulty in fitting the terms of the award to the work of Beckett, whose reputation as a minimalist was then (in 1969) at its height. It would not be hard to list the laureates of pessimistic inclination, some of whom, such as Knut Hamsun, Pirandello, Camilo José Cela, have already been mentioned. "My theme is sin and evil. The human being is a slayer," said the laureate of 1983, William Golding, who depicted the fall into savagery in *Lord of the Flies.*

What indeed did the Swedish Academy understand by "literature"? Sometimes the award went to historians (Theodor Mommsen, Winston Churchill) or to a philosopher (Bertrand Russell). Latterly, this tendency is less marked. It seems clear that at one time behind the selections there was some large view of belles-lettres, ultimately replaced by distinct genres of poetry, drama, and the novel. But how to choose between poets, dramatists, and novelists? The problem for the Nobel judges was evident from the start. According to one Permanent

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Secretary of the Swedish Academy, to choose between poets, novelists, and playwrights was "like deciding on the relative merits of the elm, the linden, the oak, the rose, the lily or the violet." Writers are less ready to be characterized and categorized by some literary Linnaeus than are trees and flowers.

In effect, the name of the candidate is selected by a committee consisting of some three to five persons. There is often a fallback or compromise candidate. In 1970, during the controversy over Alexander Solzhenitsyn, this was apparently the position of Patrick White, gifted author of *Voss* and *Riders in the Chariot*, who in 1973 would himself become the first Australian novelist to be a Nobel laureate. Each fall, letters are sent out to former prizewinners, to past and present members of the selection committee, to luminaries of certain academic and literary institutions, along with other chosen individuals and experts who are invited to make nominations. Thus François Mauriac (Nobel prizewinner of 1952) could nominate Solzhenitsyn for 1970. These are the only nominations that are taken into consideration. In theory, what is put forward in the press carries no weight. Discussions are held, shortlists are drawn up, and the Swedish Academy announces its decision, which is final.

The "idealistic tendency" proposed by the founder implies also a certain moral inclination. The judges have tended to favor those writers who are concerned with what they call the problems of "man" in our time, with his fate, with man in society, with questions of conscience. (Why then were George Orwell, André Malraux, Graham Greene overlooked?) This ethical leaning has led to the noble form of acceptance address—by William Faulkner (whose speech was considered by some to be the best, and by others the worst of its kind), by Saul Bellow, Camus, or Solzhenitsyn (though in the last instance, through *force majeure*, the lecture could not be delivered but was written and published afterwards).

The award has often been granted to writers who have exposed injustice (for instance, John Galsworthy with his play *The Silver Box*, which treats of justice as meted out differently to the rich and the poor); or who have spoken for the underdog (John Steinbeck with *Of Mice and Men* and *The Grapes of Wrath*); or who have subtly penetrated the evils of racism in South Africa (Nadine Gordimer in *Burger's Daughter* and *July's People*). Latin American writers on the Left (Pablo Neruda, Gabriel García Márquez) who—given the stagnation or corruption they witnessed in their own societies—are keen for change, revolt, or overthrow are notable laureates. Yet it is curiously ironic to find writers who are desperately opposed to their own establishment, being commended and fêted by the Swedish Academy, and received

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by the King of Sweden, in the presence of members of the Swedish government. The fact that the Nobel committee and the Swedish Academy are bodies independent of the State seems to be blurred by the array of such dignitaries and by the courtly ceremony.

The paradox was underlined in 1964 by Jean-Paul Sartre, the only writer so far ever to have refused the Nobel Prize for Literature of his own free will (Boris Pasternak had been hounded into renouncing it in 1958). Sartre had just published his autobiographical masterpiece, *Les Mots*, and he was to receive the award, according to the citation, for the spirit of freedom in his work, his quest for truth, and his far-reaching influence on our age. Innocuous sounding enough, although Sartre's view of freedom and truth had become ever more equivocal and partial with his support for the Soviet Union and for leftist violence and terror.

At first, Sartre was perplexed: should he accept? He consulted Simone de Beauvoir who advised him to decline. In public, Sartre declared his objection to the very idea of accepting the award—even though he could have given the money to charity, for instance to those starving children whom art and literature (so he bitterly maintained) could not save. He admitted himself that he could have given it to the Anti-Apartheid Committee in London. He claimed to fear for his independence as a writer, and *that* clearly came first. In his view, the Nobel Prize for Literature served as a means whereby the State, the right wing, the right-thinking bourgeoisie, would "reclaim" him: he would be converted into an institution and would cease to be a free agent. An unlikely scenario: for what would have prevented him from carrying on exactly as before in a free and democratic society? The Nobel Prize for Literature was not as influential as all that: its sinister tentacles did not spread far and wide, destroying the integrity of its laureates. It is doubtful whether French intellectuals thought much of it, except as a proper consecration of the preeminence of French culture and civilization.

The whole subject became one of those passing *causes célèbres* of which the French are so fond, and where irony is piled on irony. To Sartre, the Nobel Prize for Literature looked like an important political arm of iniquitous Western capitalism. "I refused because I think it has had a political tinge for some time," Sartre said, while oddly confessing without much logic that he would gladly have accepted an award from a Popular Front government. Sartre appeared to be put out because (he claimed in political terms) the prize had been given hitherto to writers in the West rather than to Communists or pro-Soviet authors; because it had gone to the questioning Boris Pasternak for his lyric poetry and his controversial novel, *Doctor*

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Zhivago, in 1958, before it went to Mikhail Sholokhov (a writer in favor with the Khrushchev regime) for his novels about the Don Cossacks. "It is regrettable that the prize was given to Pasternak before Sholokhov, and that the only Soviet work to be honoured should be a work published abroad and banned at home," Sartre observed. That is an extraordinary remark: the freedom-loving Sartre acknowledges and casually accepts the banning of books in the Soviet Union without a murmur. It is callous, too, since publication of *Doctor Zhivago* abroad was Pasternak's sole alternative to silence.

Sartre could scarcely be unaware that a vicious campaign had been launched against Pasternak as soon as the poet gratefully accepted the Nobel Prize for Literature. This hounding of Pasternak was sponsored by Khrushchev, who later admitted that he had not even read *Doctor Zhivago* at the time. Pasternak was expelled from the Writers' Union, which demanded that he be stripped of his citizenship. He was threatened with banishment. Dreading exile, Pasternak prevaricated, floundered in self-criticism, wavered, and ended by renouncing the prize. In his poem "Nobel Prize," he wrote that he was caught like a beast at bay, hearing only the yelping of the pack, and that there was no way out for him. The great poet was left painfully humiliated, and he died not long afterward. His son would ultimately receive the award on his late father's behalf.

Sholokhov (later accused of plagiarism) turned out to be the laureate of 1965—that is, the year after the Sartre affair. Was the Swedish Academy influenced by Sartre's advocacy and the whole Sartrian brouhaha? Sholokhov found no difficulties placed in his path. The abuse that Moscow had heaped on the Swedish Academy for its choice of Pasternak was replaced by smiles. In one sense, Sartre showed up the anomaly of the independent writer who would readily accept an honor or a reward from the State, thus ostensibly compromising personal freedom and integrity, and the dearly cherished role of rebel. In another sense, Sartre concurred in the abuse of State power, in the silencing and persecution of a fellow writer; and he made a purely political point, adopting the Soviet line and Soviet propaganda. Some understood the true political significance of Sartre's refusal to accept the award: "Under cover of a pleasing manifesto of independence, it is really a perfectly gauged political action, a propaganda operation in support of the Eastern bloc," declared the surrealist panjandrum and one-time Communist, André Breton.

Solzhenitsyn, dismayed at the time by the "shame" of Pasternak's "voluntary renunciation" of the prize—although later showing more understanding for the author of *Doctor Zhivago*—was made of sterner stuff. As a former prisoner of the Gulag, he wanted to win the Nobel

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Prize for Literature (so he later asserted in his memoir, *The Oak and the Calf*) in order to use it to speak the truth about what was going on in his country, to give voice to all those fellow victims of the camps, both living and dead. He wanted to go to Stockholm to hurl a "thunderbolt." A person of austere habits, he had no particular esteem for the formal solemnities and celebrations associated with the prize-giving ceremonies. But he deeply despised the way in which the Soviet regime had politicized literature: the judgment of literature had been rendered inseparable from politics. Perhaps he did not know or was not interested in how far the spread of Marxism and its offshoots had politicized literature and literary criticism outside the Soviet Union, so that even opponents of Marxism were not always exempt.

The award of the Nobel Prize for Literature to Solzhenitsyn in 1970 provoked the third great uproar in its history, after the Pasternak debacle and the Sartre affair. Solzhenitsyn was the leading dissident, named for "the ethical force with which he has pursued the indispensable traditions of Russian literature." The choice was regarded as remarkable. One French writer went so far as to state that "the choice of Alexander Solzhenitsyn justifies the existence of the Nobel Prize." Solzhenitsyn, who—like Pasternak—had originally intended to go to Stockholm, feared lest he would not be allowed to return home. He asked for the presentation to be made at the Swedish embassy, but that was opposed by the Swedish ambassador, who did not wish to displease the Soviet authorities. The presentation finally took place in a private apartment. Meanwhile, Solzhenitsyn had succeeded in publicizing his position, as well as the convoluted difficulties and obstacles faced by independent-minded writers in his country. His response made a deep impression throughout the world. By using the opportunity provided by the Nobel Prize to make known the truth, he had also temporarily given the award a vital importance it fundamentally lacked.

The great merit of the Nobel Prize for Literature is that it is international in scope—even if internationalism, like idealism, is a cultural virtue, not strictly a literary one. As with eighteenth-century *philosophes* and their far-reaching social circles and connections, or in the gatherings of liberal-minded writers and thinkers around Madame de Staël at Coppet in the Napoleonic era, the judges for the Nobel Prize for Literature appear to presuppose that there exists a common culture or civilization, where the problems that face the conscience and the spirit of humanity can be posed and examined, and where writers should be at liberty to speak across frontiers and to defy barbarism.

Yet this is only one face of the award, for while the Nobel Prize for

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Literature is honorably universal, embracing writers from India (Rabindranath Tagore), Japan (Yasunari Kawabata), Nigeria (Wole Soyinka), the Caribbean (Derek Walcott), the citations monotonously discuss literature in terms of ethnic identity and nationality. To some degree this seems unavoidable, since the writer's language itself, as the essential medium or voice, is usually bound to place of birth, and can somehow mysteriously convey the spirit of a country and a people. Notable exceptions to the rule are Conrad, Kafka, and Nabokov, all of whom became masters of an adopted language.

Individual laureates are singled out for works dealing with their native land and enhancing its traditions. Latin American writers, for instance, are always lauded for writing about Latin America. What else? The lyric poetry of Gabriela Mistral (Chile, 1945), made her name "a symbol of the idealistic aspirations of the entire Latin American world." Similarly, Miguel Angel Asturias (Guatemala, 1967) is praised for his literary achievement "deep rooted in the national traits and traditions of the Indian peoples of Latin America." Spanish laureates are commended for reviving the traditions of Spanish drama or Spanish poetry. Others are lauded for renewing the epic tradition of Iceland, Poland, or Russia. This national strain is a constant theme.

The joint winners of 1966, the Polish-born Israeli novelist Shmuel Yosef Agnon, a difficult writer in Hebrew as well as in English translation, and the poet Nelly Sachs, were honored—Agnon for his narrative art on themes drawn "from the life of the Jewish people," and Sachs for her writing "which interprets Israel's destiny." Rightly or wrongly, it would appear as if the Nobel judges feel that a certain country has been neglected, and that it is the turn, say, of Iceland, Belgium, or Denmark. Do they think that it is time that an award went to Israel and the modern revival of Hebrew as a spoken and literary tongue? Do they inquire whether this year they might think more closely of Australia or South Africa? Well, why not?

An apt award in this sense was that made in 1978 to a popular American writer in Yiddish, Isaac Bashevis Singer, for his narrative art "with roots in Polish-Jewish cultural tradition." The award caused some surprise: Malcolm Bradbury, the British novelist and professor of American Studies at the University of East Anglia, was expecting the prize to go to Graham Greene, who would never receive it. In his acceptance speech, the first ever made in Yiddish, I. B. Singer declared that the honor devolved not only on himself but "also upon the Yiddish language, a language of the Diaspora, without a country, without frontiers, and unsupported by any State." Since the award to I. B. Singer, Yiddish, which has long been much despised, widely thought to be a very poor second to Hebrew, and virtually a dead

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language, has known an astonishing resurrection and not only as a subject for study. How much this is owing to the air of respectability and importance conferred on the tongue by the Nobel Prize remains problematic but suggestive.

In some countries, especially those whose writers are unaccustomed to much notice, there is intense patriotic gratification if a native son or daughter wins the Nobel Prize for Literature: it is akin to a victory in international sport. In others, in Great Britain, for instance, while people are naturally pleased, it makes relatively little stir. Did anyone there think more highly of William Golding because he was a Nobel laureate than they did before? Borges said once: "When I write, I do not think of myself as an Argentinian or a Spaniard: I write in order to be understood." Lovers of literature would be touched by that observation, sensing that the major writer transcends nationality.

It is evident that because the Nobel Prize for Literature is linked to an establishment body, the Swedish Academy (however nominally independent), its celebrations being graced by the Swedish monarch and government, a controversy cannot be pursued to the limit. The award is made, and then the laureate is left to swing in the wind. When Pasternak was persecuted, Camus and others sent him letters of moral support. Officially, did the Swedish Academy do the same? To have insisted more strongly and publicly as regards Pasternak and Solzhenitsyn at the height of the Cold War might well have provoked an international incident, or so it then appeared. The geographical proximity of Sweden to the former Soviet Union should not be discounted in assessing the balance of courage and timidity, or second thoughts.

What would happen if the Nobel Prize for Literature were to be awarded to the British novelist Salman Rushdie, for many years under sentence of death for a work of fiction? Would the ayatollahs in Iran and Muslim fundamentalists elsewhere who sustain the *fatwa* declare war on Sweden and promote terror? Two members of the Swedish Academy are said to have resigned because it did not issue a public condemnation of the death threat against Salman Rushdie. Whatever may be thought of Rushdie's perspicacity or his literary merits (which doubtless are not inferior to those of some past laureates), he is the victim of one of the most singular and dangerous attacks on freedom of imaginative expression in modern experience. As regards the Rushdie phenomenon, Alfred Nobel's fondness for an "idealistic tendency" with ethical undertones could be demonstrated, if not quite in the manner that he foresaw. Such a stand would prove that literature still matters, something that the award of the Nobel Prize has consistently if cautiously implied.

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Yet fundamentally, the effect of the Nobel Prize on literature itself and on writers is minimal. It does not help to encourage or foster struggling talent. It does not influence the public to probe the nature and art of writing or to seek to acquire the qualities of literary discrimination and judgment. On the whole, those who "hit the jackpot," as V. S. Naipaul phrased it, are not necessarily better writers than those who fail to do so. But one does not look a gift horse in the mouth: the laureates are simply more fortunate in being able to enjoy additional prestige and financial reward. With the Nobel Prize for Literature, too many political and geographical motives come into play, too many extraneous considerations that have little or nothing to do with the act of writing or the art of literature as such.

Owing to the founder's prescription of idealism, a certain kind of literature has normally been omitted—namely, writing that does not carry with it any particular message, whether of social justice, moral concern, or religion. The proponent of art for art's sake, the writer who saw art itself as the highest value, and who might even sacrifice his life to it, could forget about the Nobel Prize for Literature—and doubtless would have despised it anyway as a philistine irrelevance, which to some degree it is.

Had the Prize been instituted earlier in the nineteenth century, it is conceivable that a determinedly hopeful idealist such as George Sand together with moralists of the stature of George Eliot and Dickens would have been probable choices. On the other hand, it is extremely unlikely that the "immoral" Flaubert, Baudelaire, or Oscar Wilde (who died in 1900) would ever have been chosen as laureates. These were in their various ways—along with Henry James, Marcel Proust, James Joyce—the high priests of art. As for those ironic satirists who, with Borges or Nabokov, liked to take the literary heritage as some form of serious play, mysterious metaphysical game, or disturbingly equivocal riddle, they could scarcely be accommodated. If the award of the Nobel Prize for Literature is to be made to those writers who "continue the illustrious traditions" of their country's poetry, fiction, and drama, it is not going to be given to the difficult loners and the daring innovators—or, at least, not until they have become self-parodists or have turned into establishment figures about to pass to a better world.

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Heat Lightning

ROBERT MORGAN

When I was four I was afraid
of any gunshot or backfire
or clap of thunder. I lived in
terror that a rifle crack would
break the sky or crush my own head.
It seemed a firecracker could split
time in two. Big noise was the start
of doom. I lived in fear of cap
guns and the preacher's shouts. Even
the pain of earache was not as
scary as the voice that shadowed
lightning. My mother said I was
awakened at the service for my
soldier uncle by the salute
fired over us and did not forget.
And all the talk of nuclear war
did not soothe me. Each day I saw
all matter crumble from within,
the sky melting in a flash and flesh
boiled by the report of explosions
just over the horizon. Even
heat lightning thrilled me into hiding
as the north lit up, lit up, and
I listened for the whoosh of hell
and awful pain already felt
inside my ears, and waited for
the lethal thrust that never came.

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Uncle Hans in Exile

EVELYN TOYNTON

IN HIS PHYSICAL PRESENCE, at least, my father's elder brother was a perfect specimen of the old-fashioned patriarch. Larger, louder, fiercer than anybody else, he dominated every family gathering, his laughter as thunderous as his rage, and both somehow unmistakably German in cadence. To show up ten minutes late, to oppose the most minor of his dictates was to witness what looked like the beginnings of apoplexy. Sometimes his meekly adoring wife would clutch at my arm and plead with me to leave, afraid he might burst a blood vessel if he kept shouting at me.

But imperious though he was, he was hardly a patriarch in the grand moral sense. While others in the family devoted themselves to good works, he seemed to take no interest in serious causes. At the age of fifty, claiming that his two brothers worked hard enough for three, he had quit his hated job in a brokerage house to lead his idea of the good life, dragging his complaisant wife to the Serengeti Plain and across the Indian subcontinent, taking up residence in Europe every summer. He spent a month at an archaeological site in Greece and got a visa to visit the pyramids by claiming, on his application, to be a Catholic rather than a Jew. When in New York, he appeared to spend most of his time in restaurants, although he frequented museums also, and occasionally auction houses, buying himself two unsigned Renaissance portraits of Italianate-looking men, with verdant hills and tiny crooked houses in the background. These he hung in the shabby one-bedroom apartment in Washington Heights he'd moved to when he and his wife first arrived in New York, and which he saw no need to desert when affluence was upon them.

He entertained himself in odder ways, too—taking private lessons in Finnish, for example, and in Hungarian, because he found it droll to compare the differences among languages; busying himself with the immigration problems of the waiters in his favorite restau-

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rants. He would spend the afternoon, after the lunch crowd had gone, with their naturalization forms spread out on the table before him, talking to them in his pidgin Greek or Italian or Hindi—booming with laughter, insisting that they correct his mistakes; like many lonely people, he always seemed most at his ease with strangers. Sometimes he sent one of them to his lawyer for help with a green card, just as he had sent the cleaning lady in his office to California for a vacation. For his generosity was as immoderate as his wrath. One of his more singular amusements was to pay for the meals of total strangers, particularly women no longer young and not terribly pretty; he would instruct the waiter to bring him their bill and tell them an admirer had taken care of it. Then he would pat my hand: "I couldn't have done that if I were here alone. Emilio would take me for a dirty old man."

Twenty minutes later, though, he might be pounding the table and roaring at me—for wearing textured stockings, for wasting my time and my father's money on the study of English literature, for going on a peace march: "What do you know about this war? You just enjoy getting together with the others and screaming like banshees. Next time they should throw you in jail with the other criminals and let you rot." "It's called civil disobedience, Uncle Hans; it's not exactly like robbing old ladies in alleyways. Are you really telling me you can't see the difference?" "Of course it is the same—they are criminals, criminals, and you are a criminal, too." The people at the nearby tables would stare at us, his friends the waiters would hover solicitously—I was sure they would never intervene if he slugged me, only if it were the other way around—while we glared at each other in pure hatred, a perfect genetic communion of bad temper.

But the worst explosion I ever provoked from him was about the Germans. The year I was seventeen, he had taken my sister and me to Europe for a Grand Tour, and we were spending a week in Paris. On our last night in town, a man who worked for my father had invited us out for dinner, and in the course of the evening he and his wife had told us about their experiences during the war. They had been hidden in a barn by Polish farmers, while their infant daughter was locked in a closet, so that her spine and legs never grew properly; she still needed crutches and a brace. It was the first time I had heard a story like that from someone who had actually lived it. Walking back to our hotel, brooding over what they'd told us, I said reproachfully to my uncle, "I don't see how you can not hate the Germans."

He grabbed me without warning, shaking me so ferociously that the wind was knocked out of me, and screamed that they hadn't known, they hadn't known, nobody had told them what was really

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going on; the Nazis were only the scum, the German people had hated them too, but what could they do, they had the guns; it was my precious English who had invented concentration camps. . . . My sister, always anxious to please him, chimed in on his side, but he only shushed her frantically and went on talking, shouting, offering up all the mad justifications for the Germans that the Germans themselves—though I did not know this at the time—were wont to give. The words poured out in a flood, as though they had been lying in wait for years, decades; as though, at three in the morning, when he could not sleep, these were the arguments he conjured up to ward off the horror. He seemed hardly to pause for breath, or to notice I was there.

And for once I was too frightened to shout back. I stood there paralyzed, waiting for sanity to return, until finally, abruptly, he released me and marched off in the direction of our hotel. But I had learned a certain measure of prudence. When we arrived, a few days later, at the Grand Hotel in Nuremberg, the city where my father and uncle had been born, I pretended not to notice the scars on the cheek of the obsequious desk clerk who greeted Hans by name; nor did I mention the creepy middle-aged man who had followed me when I went out alone, and how I had burst into tears and called him a Nazi.

My uncle took us to see the Gymnasium he and my father had attended, from which he had nearly been expelled for dangling his feet out a window; the narrow street where they had lived with their parents; their grandfather's incongruously lacy, French-looking villa, just inside the city's old wall. Here my great-grandfather had entertained Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria, who had conferred on him certain honorary titles for his services to the court. We went to the Albrecht Dürer Haus and the Biergartens, where the professionally jolly waiters laughed with Hans about our failure to drink up, and we gagged over headcheese and something concocted from pigs' bladders. We accompanied him to his tailor, and to the shop from which he always bought his old-fashioned shirts with the detachable collars. We made excursions to the opera house in Munich and to Neuschwanstein and Herrenchiemsee, the castles of the mad King Ludwig.

But never did we go to Dachau, from which my mother's father had carried his dying brother in 1938, both of them so ill with typhus that the Nazis didn't want them there anymore; and from which my favorite cousin had rescued her husband in 1939 by bringing his medals from the 1914–18 war to a police station that was imperfectly Nazified and persuading the police to intervene. (Her

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brother, also a war veteran, had once horsewhipped Julius Streicher in his office for publishing scurrilous stories about their father.) We were pretending that German history was all Schiller and Kaiser Wilhelm and Friedrich Barbarossa, that Nuremberg was simply a great medieval city, not the home of Der Stürmer, the site of those vast rallies in the thirties, a place that had given its name to certain infamous laws restricting the rights of Jews and half-Jews, quarter-Jews and Jews married to Gentiles in Hitler's Reich. The Tourist Authority of the Federated Republic, whose brochures so assiduously promoted the same impression, should have given us an award.

Yet the longer we stayed in Germany, embroidering our lie of omission, the gloomier my uncle became, sinking further and further into silence, until even I began to feel a little sorry for him. He would sit in a café, staring out over the square, and sigh heavily; he would gaze morosely down certain alleyways we passed, or at certain windows of old buildings, removing his glasses and rubbing the bridge of his nose like someone wiping away tears. What was he thinking of? Was he grieving for the victims of genocide or only the ordinary passing of a childhood world?

The rest of the family, too, had emigrated with their leather-bound volumes of Goethe and their prized recordings of Beethoven's string quartets. Presumably they did not throw out the Lebkuchen and Bratwurste Hans sent them on his periodic trips back, but none of them indulged in this shameful nostalgia for Germany. Perhaps they disapproved of it as I did, finding it undignified or worse: to them, it was a point of honor not to keep pining for a country that had spurned them. For that was what my uncle was like—a spurned and stricken lover, unable to believe that his beloved had turned on him with such viciousness, trying to cast the murderous facts in a more palatable light.

It is possible to imagine him—the eldest son of the eldest son, destined to inherit the Frenchified villa and the best Meissen and his father's decorations for bravery—feeling some particular streak of patriotism, a special allegiance to the country his father had fought for. And it is possible to discern, in his lifelong fascination with the heroic past—he had been a passionate amateur Egyptologist, serving as a consultant to the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin—some strain of romanticism that made him more susceptible to the Teutonic myths than any Jew should have been. Apart from that, it is difficult to see why he, of all the family, should have clung so desperately to the idea of Germany. They had all thought of themselves as Germans, after all, that being the only identity they'd been taught. None of them had been given religious training, celebrated Jewish

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holidays, attended a synagogue except for weddings and funerals—and even weddings, as in my uncle's case, were often civil affairs, since many of the family married Gentiles. They had prided themselves on their assimilation; Germanness had pervaded their lives; and suddenly permission was withdrawn, they were not allowed to be German any longer. Yet, of all of them, Hans was the one who wound up sitting in a crowded café in Nuremberg in a state of such palpable loneliness that he seemed to be surrounded by vast and desolate space. He was the one trying, in the city of his birth, to buy the friendship of waiters with extravagant tips.

After that trip to Germany, I went off to college and my uncle resumed his travels, so that for years we saw each other very infrequently, and always with disastrous results. That was the period of my textured stockings and protest marches, and of his increasing bitterness with the world, so that our lunches could be counted on to end in an eruption. Once he actually ordered me out of a restaurant, because I had told him I loved Oscar Wilde. When my father reported that Hans could no longer travel as he used to, because his wife was sick with "hardening of the arteries" and he would not leave her, I said meanly that it served my uncle right. After years of doing exactly as her husband wanted, of never daring to interfere with his plans, my submissive aunt was exacting a sort of revenge.

If my father had not gotten bone cancer, and I had not left my rich husband, I might hardly have had any further contact with my uncle. But the two events in combination brought me back to New York when I was twenty-four. I had determined, in a rather consciously righteous way, not to take any of my husband's millions away from him and was surprised to find that nobody thought this a wise idea. My usually temperate father, lying in a hospital bed with his leg amputated at the knee, became horribly agitated about it, crying out that I was a fool and threatening to hire a lawyer to intervene in the matter. Even more shocking, my friends from college, whose lives of poverty in the East Village I had regarded as more virtuous than my own, all seemed to agree with him.

My uncle was the very last person I expected to appreciate the subtle point of honor involved. On the day he came to visit me in my dingy apartment on Tenth Street—inspecting the place, I knew, at my father's behest—I braced myself for the worst explosion yet. But all he did was shake his head mournfully, hand me an enormous parcel of tea and lingonberry jam and Bahlsen cookies, and ask whether my husband hadn't at least offered to give me something to tide me over. I said that he hadn't, which was true—he had only offered me various

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inducements (an English sports car, a full Freudian analysis) if I would stay. My uncle looked stern. "Then of course you can't ask him for anything. It's very bad to take money from a stingy person."

In retrospect, I am not sure he had hit on a maxim to live by, but at the time I felt as though I had received a benediction. For the first time ever, he was on my side. And during the year that followed—while my father was shunted from one hospital to another, radiated and burned and poisoned, his leg hacked away still further; while my uncle's wife, afflicted with what must have been Alzheimer's disease, withered away in a nursing home in Westchester, moaning for him constantly when he was absent but moaning just as much when he was there—my uncle and I arrived at a truce that would prove to be lasting. Occasionally there were still the old outbursts—when I changed jobs, for example, and he, who had never shown much fondness for jobs, roared at me that I had no *Sitzfleisch*, no *Sitzfleisch* at all—but mostly we were awkwardly, fussily gentle with each other, full of lame solicitude. If one of us so much as sneezed, the other would cluck and fret and propose remedies like a mother hen—hardly the customary practice in our family.

When the weather permitted, we might go for long walks in the park on Sunday afternoons, he in his high-topped, glossy black shoes, with the funny rounded toes and the little hooks instead of holes for the laces, that he ordered from a shoemaker in Zurich, I in battered sneakers of which he surely disapproved. Once he persuaded me to come with him to the opera, sometimes I met him for dinner after he'd been to visit his wife, but most of our time together was spent in the back of the car that took us out to Connecticut to see my father. My brother was away at college; my sister had moved to Canada with her husband; my father's younger brother had died ten years before. Hans and I, then, were the family's chief attendants, constant visitors from New York to that suburban hospital where, until recently, my father had served on the board of trustees, launching an expansion program that would link it to various teaching hospitals. Now his efforts were bearing fruit in his own case: the doctors connected to the place kept coming up with hopeful new suggestions, new leads to follow up about experimental treatments at Yale or Sloan-Kettering or Dana Farber. They were always showing up in my father's hospital room with copies of the *New England Journal of Medicine,* write-ups about chemotherapy and radiation and hormone treatments, promises to phone the man in charge and ask him to see my father at once.

It was probably unfortunate that my husband had been a Harvard doctor, doing a residency at a Harvard hospital, so that I

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could not regard such figures as infallible, especially since half the conversation among the interns and residents had consisted of horror stories about hospital screwups. I had heard about the anesthesiologist at Mass General who was late for a tennis date and so yanked the oxygen off someone before breathing function was restored, and the inept graduate of the medical school who had been thrown out of two internships elsewhere and then given a place at Cambridge City, because Harvard looks after its own. Even worse, my favorite among my husband's old classmates used to fulminate against the oncologists, painting them as vultures always on the look-out for prey. They lied about their success rates, he said, in order to trick cancer patients into participating in their experiments; they recommended treatments based on their need to justify expensive radiation equipment they'd bought.

And there was my father, with his exaggerated diffidence in the face of other people's learning, his near-nineteenth-century faith in science and reason, Harvard degrees and human progress, thanking those men profusely for their efforts and signing on for one bout of torture after another. I could not tell him what my husband's friend had said—it would have been like saying he was doomed to die—but every time they tried one of those treatments and failed, every time they burned or poisoned him or cut him open to no avail, I remembered the story of the falsified success rates. My father had taken on a look of dazed suffering, a sort of terrible, mute patience that made me hate those doctors more and more.

Only to my uncle could I express such feelings, he having also no faith in doctors and science, or American know-how in general (the treatment he'd chosen for his varicose veins was to be leeched by an elderly doctor in Switzerland). Together we grieved for my father's innocence, his humility, as though he were our trusting virgin daughter being seduced before our eyes. We looked on helplessly, unable to protect him, as these men showed up to offer their blandishments, and then vented our bitterness on the ride back.

"What do you think they would have done to him if he'd been the local mailman? Do you think they would have given him this new treatment?"

"No."

"So: they let the mailman die in peace, and your father is put on the rack. But this Dr. Castilaw seems pleased with the treatment. What did you think of him?"

"I thought he was a self-important jerk like all the others. A real Harvard bastard."

"You shouldn't use that language; your husband won't like it."

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"But I don't have a husband, Uncle Hans."

"When you have one, he won't like it." He sighed. "You'll marry a marine biologist in Corpus Christi, Texas, and I'll never see you anymore."

"I'll come visit you."

"Not very often. What will I do when I'm old and sick and need to be put out of my misery? Who's going to shoot me if you're not around? Your sister will never do it."

Finally, the time came when the doctors stopped suggesting new treatments, when they started to withdraw from the picture, and my father requested that they do nothing further to keep him alive. He slipped in and out of high fevers. We could never know, when we went to see him, if he would be awake or asleep, or if he would recognize us when his eyes opened. And in the last weeks of his life, he, too, began returning to Germany, inquiring about trains to Stuttgart, imagining I was visiting him from Heidelberg, where their younger brother had gone to university. Once, it being winter, I arrived at the hospital in high leather boots, and pointing at them, he said faintly, "So wie die SS."

Unlike my uncle, my father had never talked to us about Germany, never even told us stories about his childhood. Maybe he hadn't wanted to burden his American children with the weight of his history. He had been so fervently American in many ways, so busy with civic projects, so concerned with what lay ahead rather than behind, that I had scarcely thought of him as an immigrant. Now his German brother was reclaiming him, bearing him back into their past. More and more, they spoke together in German, my uncle bending down close to the bed, my father, half-conscious, whispering things I could not understand. Watching them, I felt an enormous loneliness, although whose it was I could not be sure—whether my own, at seeing my father die in a foreign language; or my father's, at the approach of death; or some distillation of how the two of them must have felt once, the old loneliness of being cast out from everything they had known.

On almost our last ride back from the hospital, at two in the morning, Hans said to me, "Do you know what I am? The Generation of the Desert. Do you know about them?" I didn't. "They are the ones who wandered in the desert for forty years but could not get to the Promised Land, the ones who kept saying to Moses, 'Why did you ever bring us out of Egypt? Things were so much better in Egypt.' Your father got to America, he made it to the Promised Land, but I never did."

It could be argued, of course, that my uncle did not deserve

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much sympathy—that none of them did, none of those German Jews, who were guilty, after all, of every sin of which their co-religionists accused them: arrogance, snobbery, betrayal of their heritage, selling their birthright for a mess of second-rate mythologies and sentimental poems. What did they suppose they were doing, trying to out-German the Germans, distancing themselves so scornfully from the vulgar *Ostjuden* who actually had the poor taste to practice their religion? They should have seen that they were only parroting the anti-Semitism of their world, that their snobbery amounted to hating what they were.

It is easy to accuse them of cowardice, hypocrisy, monumental self-deception, but there were the Germans, offering them that dangerous choice—saying, in effect, "It's a terrible thing to be Jewish, but we won't make you be; we'll let you be German instead: enlightened, cultured, dignified, prosperous too. We'll give you this world instead of the other one." And then they stripped it away from them, leaving them with nothing at all. When I remember my uncle in Nuremberg, I seem to recognize the expression on his face, incomprehensible to me then. It was bewilderment at the vagaries of history, at what had been done to him, which was so much less than what was done to so many others, and yet enough to leave him marooned for life.

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Copperheads

The New York Draft Riots

E. M. SCHORB

Vanish these walls, vanish this wealth, with visionary eyes that see
back to hot July 1863. Vanish where wealth shines shopping on Fifth
Avenue, five minutes from the lion-braced library, where I turn down

my book. Vanish these great, gray walls, to see when this mirage
was another, of a white-winged building housing motherless humanity.
Try to see out of the eyes of two hundred frightened black orphans

and their saviors, or better, the eyes of one little girl under her bed,
who is to be beaten to sleep and burned alive. They come now, the first,
malignant rumble of mobs is heard. A giant, bearing a huge American flag,

appears. Ten thousand men and women follow. They shout: *NO DRAFT;*
shout: *KILL THE NIGGERS!* One mob of ten thousand, among many mobs,
one mad mob, is coming; Copperheads coming; but Mary doesn't know

what they are. Snakes, she is told; and, people like snakes. Snakes?
What does it mean? But behind them the sky is red, as if the sun had
set in broad day, as if it had hit the earth and bounced back to the sky

in cones of flame, like upward teeth, serrating the downward, hot blue.
The fireworks for the Fourth, a week before, had shaken her.
Looking everywhere, she saw no arms to hold her. *BOOM BOOM!*

Now again—*BOOM BOOM!* But this is wilder, worse. She caps her ears,
her eyes rolling for a mother, while the giant bearing Old Glory juts
his lantern jaw toward the white-winged building where she hides terror

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in tears, holding her braided, ribboned head as, between her ten-year-old
fingers, distorted clangor of malignant mob-voice penetrates with
curses and screams of coves and harpies, liquored-up looters, drink-mad,

blood-mouthed molls, ill-wind-shifted, now, toward Mary in the white-winged
Colored Orphan Asylum on Fifth Avenue, the ghost-building, inside tall
wealth, that I can reach in five minutes from this great, gray library,

close my book and walk out into the Fifth Avenue festival of limousines
and be inside of its smoldering, ectoplasmic doors with the orphan children,
who are always poorest, with Mary, who hides under her bed, her eyes

spraying terror, shutting her ears to the Fourth of July or, now,
a week later, to the flag-bearing giant leading a mob through the present
affluent Fifth Avenue shoppers to *BOOM BOOM KILL THE NIGGERS*

NO DRAFT KILL, outside the library window on Fifth Avenue, inside of,
behind, through, the tremendous modern traffic stalled at red, frustrated,
Manhattan-honking. *KILL!* Mary sees feet, fast feet. She doesn't

understand that the children are being herded out to safety, to
Blackwell's Island on the East River. Mary sees feet
scurry by her bed, sees a watery world, like one submerged, when she

looks out. Then, above her bed, something huge and malignant appears,
something too big. An evil thing! She will not come out from under, she will
not, as the white-winged building shakes like her body with battering

and the doors are pulled from their hinges. Mary tries to find her mother
inside of herself, and finds an entrance and a dark hall. She goes in,
finds herself upright, her legs steady under her. She pats the bodice

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of her pink dress, straightens her pink ribbon—for she knows her mother
waits at the end of the dark hall—as the giant lifts her to the sky—
knows a door will open at the end of the dark hall—and dashes her ten-

year-old body down. Great doors open, her mother shimmers with beauty,
with long, strong, brown open arms. In fury at his loss, the giant howls
after the escaping orphans, and flames rise up around him as he moves,

touching, touching the pitiful beds of orphans, touching and torching,
his small mad head hissing, spitting curses upon Lincoln, the top-
hatted ape, and Greeley, and niggers, niggers, for his tongue would fork

with curses if it could, as the white-winged asylum crumbles
in flames inside of the facades of now with its *BEEP BEEP* of prosperity.
As if the great library walls had vanished, as if the market values of now,

with their multimillions of construction, were transparent, there
stands the Colored Orphan Asylum, and there inside is Mary, hiding under
her bed. Mary and the flag-bearing giant. Mary and the mad mob. I lean

back in my library chair and push up my glasses. I am trying to see more
clearly. I think I don't understand any more than Mary did,
as the lion-braced library walls form around me again, shutting me off

from my shopping, struggling fellow Americans on Fifth Avenue, outside,
who cannot see the white-winged Colored Orphan Asylum as they pass it.
But I know that all hurts must be outlived as humanity presses forward.

✪ E. M. Schorb is the author of three collections of poetry, *The Poor Boy and Other Poems, Like the Fall of Rome and Other Humanitarian Disasters,* and *50 Poems.*

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No Gambling at the Casino Paganini

HUGH McGINNIS FERGUSON

Nicolò Paganini, the greatest violinist who ever lived, was so big and powerful that he used a custom-made, oversized bow. My first violin teacher told me that. I was eleven years old. Right then, Paganini became my hero.

I had real need of such a hero. I had taken up the violin thoughtlessly, only because I loved the sound of it, never considering the price I would have to pay in the schoolyard. Things had been tough enough there anyway, thanks to the short pants and long curly hair that so pleased my mother. The violin case just complicated what were already dicey circumstances. The image of a powerful, manly violinist steadied me when I had to run the gauntlet.

Years later I learned that Paganini was of only average height and positively scrawny. By that time I was in long pants and wore a crew cut and had given up any serious idea about becoming a violinist. But I still thought of Paganini in heroic terms. Partly, perhaps, because he had been there when I needed him. Mostly, though, because he was the greatest violin virtuoso who had ever lived.

The greatest who ever lived. The older I got, the more that impressed me. Of what soldier, statesman, painter, actor, doctor, scientist, athlete could that be so unequivocally said? The list is very short.

Eventually I found time to start reading about Paganini. I wanted to add substance to my sketchy knowledge of him. But certainty proved elusive. The countless contradictions I found in the first few biographies and articles I read left me bewildered. No wonder my violin teacher thought his bow was long! I read that it was long, and that it wasn't; that his hand was large, small, and medium; that he never practiced, and that he practiced unremittingly; that his parents were poor, that they raised him in a large, airy apartment in Genoa, and that they had a four-story house in the country. I noted with satisfaction, however, that no one was denying his position as the greatest violin virtuoso who ever lived.

As I continued to read, hoping to separate the specious versions from the valid, I began taking notes; I started a bibliography and began questioning the trustworthiness of each new source. Soon the methodology of research took on its own fascination. A good thing, too. There were long periods when I accomplished little beyond the formation of tentative opinions about the reliability of a source or two.

Years passed, and disparate accounts began sorting themselves out along the lines of relative credibility. I grew confident that Paganini's hand was of medium size but very flexible; that he himself was of average height but appallingly thin; that he grew up in a comfortably middle-class home; and that he practiced prodigiously in his early years, and thereafter sporadically, although always intensely. I even learned that he himself once told of using a long bow (at a concert during his teens) but that in later life he reverted to bows of normal length.

Accounts that contradicted these conclusions were everywhere, but I came to perceive them as apocryphal. They formed a basis, I saw, for another Paganini—the Paganini of legend. A colorful fellow, to be sure, but not the one I was after.

There was one episode in (the real) Paganini's life that remained murky, even though every source said essentially the same thing about it: the affair of the Casino Paganini. The elements of the story were always the same. Often, the form was, too—right down to the

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very words used. It made for singularly unconvincing reading. It was like reading carbon copies. I had no clearer picture of the Casino after the twentieth version than after the first.

I probably wouldn't have spent much time puzzling over it except for what it seemed to imply about Paganini. It made him look weak. The story declared that the Casino was conceived as a gambling hall. The prevailing deduction was that Paganini's involvement in it revealed his chronic weakness for gambling. Somehow I couldn't accept that. I had come to perceive Paganini's psyche as stalwart—just as stalwart as I had once perceived his physique to be. One day it struck me that the Casino Paganini affair might constitute the biggest contradiction of all.

The Casino Paganini opened fleetingly in Paris near the end of 1837, three years before Paganini's death. Almost any reference will tell you that it was a gambling house that failed when the government refused it a license and that Paganini, a major stockholder, lost heavily when it went under.

Some accounts don't even mention the music. The 1989 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, for instance, after pointing out that Paganini had "indulged excessively in gambling" as a youth, dismisses the entire subject with: "Following the failure of the Casino Paganini, a gambling house in which he had invested, he went to Marseille in 1839."

When mentioned at all, the music is often characterized as merely a front. Alan Kendall, whose biography *Paganini* was published in 1982, writes: "The publicity material stated that there would be facilities for all sorts of amusements and recreations, including music and dancing. . . . In fact the financial basis of the place was to be its gambling rooms, as befitted a true casino."

Kendall is simply echoing Jeffrey Pulver, whose widely respected *Paganini: The Romantic Virtuoso* was published almost fifty years earlier (1936). "The prospectus," wrote Pulver, "provided for amusements and recreations of every kind: Music, dancing, the fine arts, conversation, lectures, reading; but the main object, though kept in the background at the outset, was to provide a locale for gambling."

Two years later, Renée de Saussine put an even more furtive cast on it. "It was whispered," she wrote in her biography *Paganini* (1938) "that the Casino, to take the most favourable view of it, was only a gambling hall in disguise."

Almost twenty years after that, in 1957, Geraldine de Courcy's two-volume, eight-hundred-page, heavily documented *Paganini: The Genoese* appeared. In *The New Yorker*'s review of it, the Casino got a lively play. "Paganini was a gambler and an investor in dubious securities and financial schemes," wrote the reviewer. "His last large-scale venture in finance was a big gambling Casino in Paris, where he proposed to play the violin while his customers played roulette and baccarat." In the book itself, the description was far less vivid, Miss de Courcy contenting herself with vague references to the arrangements for gambling. Clearly, though, she disapproved of Paganini's involvement in the enterprise, deriding it (and him, by implication) as "an irresistible bait for his cupidity, if only as a 'sure fire' speculation."

By the time I had absorbed these and similar accounts, I had serious doubts that there had ever been plans for gambling at the Casino Paganini. Why, for instance, would the gambling have been "kept in the background at the outset" if it was the "main object"? Why not advertise it energetically from the very beginning?

And why was every authority so stingy with details? No one had offered a single particular about the rooms where the gambling was to have taken place, or the equipment to have been used, or (except for *The New Yorker* review) the games to have been played. No one even mentioned the date that the gambling license was denied—surely a pivotal moment in the Casino's history. Was it months before the opening? Days? Was it after the opening? On what grounds was it denied? Was the decision appealed? To whom? Finally, why was there a universal absence of attribution? No one had cited a single source for the assertion that the Casino was planned as a gambling hall.

I had learned, meanwhile, that the name "casino," though it suggested the possibility of gambling, did not then, as it does today, mean "gambling hall." In Italian, *casino* is the diminutive of *casa*, or *house*. To the Italians of that day it meant a house or apartment dedi-

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cated to socializing and parties. And gambling, though often a part of Italian social life, was not central to it.

But if the story was untrue, who or what had started it? I wanted to look for its origins, but thanks to the code of silence among its perpetrators, I didn't know where to start. All I could do was study every reference to the Casino that I could find. And that, as it turned out, was all it took. A clue eventually emerged from the material itself: a pattern in the way the story was told. Once I recognized it, I just kept my eye out for its earliest appearance.

At the end of 1836 some speculators asked the baron [Paganini] to lend the support of his name and his prestige to the establishment of a Casino in Paris where, under the pretext of having a flowering of the musical arts, gambling would form the principal entertainment. (My translation.)

—Conestabile, Gian Carlo, *Vita di Niccolò Paganini, Nuova edizione con aggiunte e note di Federico Mompellio.* Milano, Genova, Roma, Napoli, 1936.

. . . a large and fashionable club—ostensibly with the view of giving concerts, but in reality for gambling purposes. . . . But the gambling license was refused.

—"Paganini, Nicolo," in Grove, George, D.C.L. *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. 2. London: Macmillan and Company, 1880.

. . . a *Casino*, for which music was the pretext, but of which the real object was gambling . . . but the government did not grant the hoped-for authority to make it a gaming-house.

—"Paganini," by G.F.G., in vol. 7 (New Series) of *Hoggs Instructor.* Edinburgh, 1851.

En 1836 des spéculateurs l'engagèrent à leur donner l'appui de son nom et de son talent pour la fondation d'un Casino dont la musique était le prétexte, et dont le jeu était l'objet réel . . . mais le gouvernement n'accorda pas l'autorisation qu'on avait espérée pour en faire une maison de jeu, et les spéculateurs furent réduits au produit des concerts qui n'égalèrent pas le dépenses.

—Fétis, F. J. "Paganini (Nicolas)." *Biographie Universelle des Musiciens.* Bruxelles, Tome Septieme, 1841.

Voilà!

Even with my rusty French, I felt confident that I had arrived at the fountainhead. Fétis had published this only a year after Paganini's death and only four after the Casino's opening. He, like his successors, gave no source for his information, but since, as I learned, he was founder and editor of the *Revue Musicale* of Paris and had been personally acquainted with Paganini, he could have been writing from firsthand knowledge. And he had impressive credentials. Just a glance at his entry in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* was enough to persuade me that he was a formidable figure in the history of musicology.

Then why was I still not convinced? For me to doubt his veracity seemed the height of impudence. But doubt it I did. I simply couldn't accept the shadow that this brief passage—I came to think of it as the Fétis doctrine—seemed to cast on Paganini's judgment, if not his character. Fétis didn't directly slander Paganini. But since Paganini had admittedly gambled recklessly in his youth, Fétis, simply by labeling the music of the Casino a "pretext" for running a gambling hall, created an innuendo that prepared the way for the slurs that were to follow.

And follow they did. Consider what John Sugden wrote in his 1980 biography *Niccolo Paganini: Supreme Violinist or Devil's Fiddler?* Describing how the idea for the Casino was first proposed to Paganini by an old friend, Lazzaro Rebizzo, he claims that Rebizzo was "well aware of his friend's weakness for gambling. What more appropriate establishment in which to persuade him to invest some of his huge fortune?"

A more sensational case for Paganini's weakness was made by Sacheverell Sitwell, who, in his biography of Franz Liszt (*Liszt*, 1967), wrote:

Even the image of his clothes has a little of horror left in it, more especially about his black, bone-shaped trousers. They are the trousers of someone who has slept in them when too ill or too drugged to bother about it, and who has passed the entire night gambling with curious partners against sinister adversaries. Paganini was, in very truth, an inveterate gambler, and had, before now, been forced to pawn his violin in order to pay his debts. Later on, he was to nearly ruin himself with the Casino Paganini, a gambling hell [*sic*] for which he was refused a licence.

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. . . In 1836 his old mania for gambling, or for the associations of gambling, returned to him, and he left Parma for Paris, where the Casino Paganini had recently been opened at his instigation and with his financial support.

Several years later, Alan Walker, in his highly acclaimed *Franz Liszt: The Virtuoso Years* (1983), gave an even more vivid portrayal:

Paganini was addicted to the gaming tables and would often gamble the night away in darkened, smoke-filled rooms with bizarre characters from the underworld as his opponents, making and losing whole fortunes on the spin of a wheel or the turn of a card. He would emerge from these hell-holes blinking in the morning sunlight, half drugged from alcohol and datura cigars, the only oral palliatives strong enough to dull the pain in his rotting jawbone, and go straight to the concert hall in the crumpled, stale-smelling evening suit he had worn all night. His violin was pawned several times in order to tide him over to his next concert receipts. The outcome of his passion for gambling was the Casino Paganini, a magnificent building in the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin which he and two other speculators bought from the Duke of Padua. Paganini lived there in a spacious suite of apartments with luxurious flannel-lined walls (to deaden the sound of his violin against eavesdroppers), surrounded by roulette wheels, dice tables, and various other games of chance. His paradise turned into purgatory when the French government refused to grant him a license to operate the place, and he lost 100,000 francs.

Although neither Walker nor Sitwell cited any sources for the material in their sketches, they drew on more than the Fétis doctrine, of course. Their Paganini was, in fact, one whom I had encountered often in my years of reading: intemperate, impulsive, undisciplined, dissipated, self-indulgent, indolent, yet still able to drive audiences into a frenzy with his exquisite music. It was a Paganini compiled out of apocrypha—the Paganini, in other words, of legend. By placing this colorful fellow in the Casino Paganini, they validated his role in their nonfiction narrative. And the Casino was the perfect portal of entry. That it existed is irrefutable; that it was conceived as a gambling hall has never been denied.

The Paganini legend has exerted a strong influence on most of Paganini's biographers, even the most conservative of whom have tended to depict him as a man buffeted by passions, and the Casino episode has served as an illustration of his surrender to one of them. Yet the Paganini who was emerging from my study was slave to no passion—none, that is, but his stupendous ambition. This man would not have risked large sums to indulge a foible. Especially would he not have invested in a gambling hall.

Gambling, far from being an enticement for Paganini, was probably anathema. Georg Harrys, Paganini's secretary and assistant during a tour of Germany in the summer of 1830, had convinced me of that. Harrys quotes Paganini (in *Paganini in seinem Reisewagen und Zimmer*, 1830) as admitting that gambling had been one of his "greatest passions" as a young man and then declaring, "I later perceived indeed that a gambler is the most contemptible person on earth. In this spirit I renounced years ago the pernicious passion of gambling." His next sentence is ironic, in light of what was to come: "I know very well that I will still be everywhere proclaimed a gambler, though no one in your country, through which I have been traveling for several years, has found me at the gaming table."

That was confirmed by Harrys's own observations: "If he came near a gaming table he scarcely looked at it, almost as though he wished to get away from the cards." As for myself, although I had seen many vague, generalized references to his gambling, I had never come across a single eyewitness to it.

Paganini, it seemed clear, had survived an admittedly impetuous youth to become a deeply committed man with extraordinary fixity of purpose. In the development of his transcendental artistry, in the management of his career, in the building of his personal fortune, in the husbanding of his physical powers throughout heartrending afflictions, he evinced astonishing self-possession. Paganini was a man of strengths, not weaknesses. That's the way I saw him. Always had.

I had to find a way to refute the Fétis doctrine. I decided to seek out contemporary Paris newspapers and browse for clues. In time I found many articles, ads, squibs, and *feuilletons* (as the French journalists liked to call their columns of commentary) about the Casino, all published in Paris newspapers of the day. With my rudimentary French, I learned many details about the Casino. I learned that

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its fine orchestra gave concerts there regularly, but the acoustics were bad, and the conductor—competing head-on with Musard, Jullien, and Johann Strauss!—was a young Italian named Pugni, of whom no one had ever heard, or has, so far as I can tell, since. I learned that there was a controversy over which agency—the Commission of the Opera, the Ministry of the Interior, or the Prefecture of Police—would have final veto power over the selection of musical compositions to be performed. But I found no mention of gambling at the Casino, either actual or planned, or of any gambling license, applied for or refused.

I found plenty about gambling elsewhere in Paris. In fact, in the January 2, 1838, issue of *Galignani's Messenger* (an English-language Paris daily founded by an Italian), I stumbled upon an item about gambling more valuable to me than anything I had found about the Casino itself.

"At 12 o'clock on Sunday night," the item began, "all the legalized gaming-houses in Paris were finally closed. Notices were posted up, informing the players that not a single chance could be had after the clock had struck the appointed hour." And it went on to describe the final frenzied hours of legal gambling in Paris.

It was a stunning discovery. I sensed the Fétis doctrine starting to disintegrate, like the face of a mummy exposed to air. If legalized gaming houses had ceased to exist at midnight on December 31, 1837, some decree must have been issued well before that date; some public announcement of it must have been made; and Paganini and his partners must have heard about it. I had to find out when the decree was enacted, and how widely it was publicized.

I don't know how I would have ever tracked it down if I had not, years earlier, met a vivacious young Parisienne, Jeannine Sandrini, over lunch in a student *mensa* in Perugia, Italy, where we were both studying Italian. Years later I had dinner with her and her husband in Manhattan, and I told her about my search for the decree. She told me how to find it: Write to M. Denis Tallon, professor of law at the Université de Droit d'Economie et de Sciences Sociales de Paris. She had taken a course under him. He was a very nice man; she knew he could, and would, help me; and I should use her name.

I wrote to him, explaining in detail my attempt to disprove that there had ever been gambling plans for the Casino Paganini. His answer came almost by return mail.

Dear Mr. Ferguson,

I have found quite easily what you were looking for. . . .

The statute prohibiting public games is the Loi des 18–22 juillet 1836 portant fixation du budget des dépenses sur l'exercice 1837, article 10: "Le bail des jeux pourra être prorogé pour une année. A dater du ler janvier 1838, les jeux publics sont prohibés". (Duvergier, *Collection des lois*, vol. 36, 1836, p. 304).

This was under the reign of Louis-Philippe, a very moral man and the figurehead of the "bourgeoisie". Public gambling houses could be licensed under a "bail", i.e. a lease. This system was prorogated till the end of 1837. Afterwards, public games were prohibited in all the kingdom, and not only in Paris. It appears that Paganini either did not know of this statute or deliberately disregarded it, this being the more likely explanation.

Jeannine was right. M. Tallon was indeed a very nice man. But I was as startled by his opinion of Paganini as I was grateful for his information.

Why did he believe Paganini would *deliberately disregard* a law prohibiting gambling? He was espousing the very belief that I had asked him to help me disprove. It could only be, I reasoned, because of the power of the Paganini legend. I was gaining increased respect for the power of that legend.

With M. Tallon's letter serving as both guide and goad, I set out in search of a copy of volume 36 of Duvergier. When I found it, I learned from a footnote on page 304 that the Chamber of Deputies had debated the statute on June 17, 1836, and voted on it the same day. Now all I had to do was grab a couple of Paris newspapers from June 18 or 19 and look for the story.

There is a law as unalterable as Murphy's or Parkinson's, though it has not yet, as far as I know, been dignified by a name of its own. It states that the issues you are interested in are missing from the libraries accessible to you. True, I was able to find the June 19 *Gazette de France*, but the gaps in the files of every other Paris newspaper within my reach followed the

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above-cited law to the letter. The *Gazette* did, indeed, carry a 2,200-word summary of the debate, but that was not enough to make a case for widespread publicity.

Enter yet another coincidence. My son Sean, who had often helped me with library chores in the past, was at that time in the Midwest, planning to head East. Yes, he said graciously, he would be glad to swing by the University of Michigan, which I had discovered had *Le National* and *Le Moniteur Universel* on microfilm. There he obtained, bless his heart, photocopies of a 2,000-word account of the debate in *Le National*, and one of 9,500 words in *Le Moniteur*.

That was enough to cinch it. True, I now had only three of the more than twenty dailies that were being published in Paris in 1836, but two of those three enjoyed particular distinction. *La Gazette de France*, according to an article I found in the October 1836 issue of London's *Foreign Quarterly Review*, had, at 9,800, the highest circulation in Paris. *Le Moniteur*, meanwhile, although its sales were only 1,900, was, according to a critique I found in another London periodical—*Fraser's Magazine* of January 1838—"the official journal of all French governments." Although clearly not the most exciting paper of its day ("The *Moniteur* is always published by the same everlasting old lady, in a quarter of Paris quite unknown to song; and is edited, if editing it may be called, by M. Sauvo"), it was "made up, during the session of parliament, of a series of supplements, containing at full length the speeches of all the speakers," and was for this reason "taken at all public libraries, reading-rooms, large *cafés*, restaurants, public institutions, and by literary circles, as an indispensable document."

I was satisfied, therefore, that the law's passage had received wide publicity. Even though I had found only three of the city's newspapers, the fact that all three had given space to the story suggested strongly that most of the other papers had as well. The fact that gambling in Paris would cease to be legal at the first instant of 1838 *must* have been common knowledge for well over a year before the Casino's opening on November 15, 1837. It would have been impossible for Paganini, his partners, the architect, the suppliers of furnishings and equipment, or anyone else involved in the project to be unaware of it.

But could Paganini still have "deliberately disregarded it," as M. Tallon suggests? It is hard to see how, for the same reason that it is hard to see how the refusal of hoped-for authorization ("le gouvernement n'accorda pas l'autorisation *qu'on avait espérée* pour en faire une maison de jeu") could have been the cause of the Casino's collapse. Not only could authorization not have been *hoped* for, it could not even have been *applied* for.

Fétis was wrong. His doctrine was dust.

And yet—how could Fétis have been so wrong? Publisher of the most influential musical journal in Paris, personally acquainted with Paganini, author not only of the article on him in his *Biographie Universelle*, but also of a monograph a few years later that was translated into English and is still in print today (*Biographical Notice of Nicolo Paganini*, reprint of 1876 edition, by François Fétis), he is quoted in almost every serious study of Paganini. How, then, could he have been so wrong about the Casino?

I stumbled across the beginning of the answer to this question while browsing through William Atwood's lively and readable biography *Fryderyk Chopin: Pianist from Warsaw* (1987). "His enormous debts," Atwood wrote of Fétis, "forced him to live outside Paris since a warrant for his arrest had been issued there." The year was 1832. "This meant he had to slip in and out of the city secretly in order to fulfill his duties." That would make it tough for a fellow to check his facts. When, if ever, I wondered, did he move back to Paris? Atwood didn't say. I looked again at *New Grove* and found that Fétis settled in Brussels in 1833. Scanning ahead to see whether he ever moved back to Paris (he didn't), I was stopped short by one of the most stunning sentences I have ever read: "The *Biographie universelle des musiciens* . . . is plagued by careless errors . . . and must therefore be consulted with discretion."

Fétis the fallible!

A welcome bit of news, but painfully skimpy. I craved elaboration, so, knowing that an old encyclopedia will often contain more information on historical subjects than its successor, I tracked down the immediate predecessor of *New Grove—Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, published in 1954—where I was rewarded with: "As an historian he was . . . impatient of contradiction. . . . The first edition of the 'Biographie'. . . is especially defective. . . .

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The second edition . . . should still be consulted with discretion; its dates are often wrong, and there are mistakes . . . which are almost ludicrous."

Thus ended the mystery of the faulty facts of Fétis. Excessively error prone, impatient of contradiction, and removed from the scene several years before any of the events had taken place, he was simply wrong about Paganini and the Casino.

And wrong, too, is the entire river of derivative accounts that flowed from Fétis's original statement. No gambling had been planned for the Casino, and those who had used that false postulate to denigrate the strength of Paganini's character would henceforth have to seek their rationalization elsewhere.

As for me, I could rest, warmed by the illusion that by solving the mystery I had, in a way, repaid an old debt.

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Dr. Livingstone, He Presumed

DAN JACOBSON

David Livingstone is without a doubt the most famous of all the medical missionaries who worked in south and central Africa during the nineteenth century. However, it was not because of his success either as a missionary or a medical man that he became one of the most celebrated of Victorians: a hero and an exemplary figure whose emaciated remains were brought back to Britain from Africa to lie in state before being interred in Westminster Abbey. It was his second career as an explorer, and as a writer and lecturer about his explorations, that turned him into a public phenomenon or legend. His appeal to those who knew nothing of Africa derived not only from the vast extent of the regions of the continent he mapped for the first time, but also from his habit of disappearing into those regions for years on end, before reappearing in equally dramatic fashion in one or another unexpected quarter of them. It was for the latter reason that his name was also to suffer the indignity of passing into the language in the form of an unintendedly comic catch phrase—"Dr. Livingstone, I presume?" For that he had to thank his fellow explorer, Henry Stanley, who had been paid to find him after the alarm raised by the most protracted of all his absences, and who greeted him in these terms when the two men finally met at Ujiji, on the shores of Lake Tanganyika, in 1871.

Their meeting took place twenty years after Livingstone had abandoned his life as a missionary, and a full six years after he had once again vanished from the view of everyone other than his African guides and porters, the tribesmen he encountered, and the occasional Arab trader or slaver. All the journeys he undertook, once several ambitious, preliminary forays across the Kalahari Desert were behind him, were of prodigious length. No hardship and danger, either in prospect or reality, ever deterred him; nor did any obligation to wife, children, fellow missionaries, would-be traveling companions, or the sponsors of his later journeys. The photographs we have of him suggest something of his indomitablity and truculence—qualities we can infer as much from the setting of his head and neck on his shoulders as from his heavy black mustache, swarthy skin, and boulder-like features. The ten-year-old boy who in Blantyre, Scotland, had worked as a mill hand from six in the morning to eight at night, and had then studied Latin until the small hours, so that he might fulfill his ambition of one day becoming a doctor, was not to be overborne in later life by anyone or anything—other than his own irascibilities, suspicions, and depressions. (His proclivity for these was reinforced rather than relieved, on the whole, by his quasi-Calvinistic faith.) Certainly he believed that on his journeys he was always doing God's work; he was helping to stamp out the slave trade and to bring in its place the blessings of what he called "Christianity and Commerce." But he was prepared to do the Lord's work only on his own terms; and he despised those who attempted to instruct him or to control his movements or failed to pursue to the letter the orders he erratically threw out at them.

As a missionary he was in fact not just a failure but a cause of failure in others. In his seven years in and near what is now the Republic of Botswana, from 1844 to 1851, he succeeded in converting just one man, Sechele,

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the chief of the Kwena tribe, to the faith he preached. His enthusiastic advocacy of hare-brained schemes of his own devising later sent other brave missionaries and their wives and children to die of fever or thirst on the banks of the Chobe River, the sands of the Kalahari Desert, and the highlands of southern Malawi. Intolerant of opposition from any source, he was also extremely jealous of his own reputation, and systematically denied other European travelers any share of credit for the "discoveries" he claimed—the Victoria Falls being probably the most spectacular of these. Even the regard he increasingly felt for the Africans he lived and worked with, and the warmth of the affection he came to have for them, are to some extent vitiated by the fact that he was never in danger of having to think of *them* as his social or professional superiors. He could therefore afford his generosity to them.

All that said, any reader of the biographies of which he is the subject, and above all any reader of Livingstone's books, private journals, letters, and papers, is bound to come away astonished by the physical power and intellectual energy of the man. That he was a great adventurer and seeker after knowledge, courageous to the point of obsession, and well beyond it, is evident enough. What is less well known is that he was also a remarkable writer, both in the more formal style of *Missionary Travels and Researches in Southern Africa* (1857), and the later *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambesi and its Tributaries* (1865), and in his much more unguarded family letters and private journals. In my opinion, he is the finest writer of English prose ever to have dealt with southern African scenes and themes.

For seven years, from one more or less chance-chosen spot or another, Livingstone looked out on the bleak, dusty, thorn-ridden landscapes of Botswana, or lumbered across them in his wagons, sometimes accompanied by his wife and infants, sometimes not. He quarreled fiercely with his fellow missionaries; preached unavailingly to the unconverted and never-to-be-converted; tried to teach their children to read and write; fathered five children of his own on his dejected wife Mary (and buried one of them); raised vegetables, did whatever gunsmithing (and, it seems, whatever gunrunning) he could for the locals; doctored them; studied their language; argued about the nature of the Almighty with the indispensable but constantly backsliding Sechele; and never ceased fretting over the best direction his future should take.

No doubt those Botswanan years, with all their failures and frustrations, contributed more than he could ever have imagined to the fanatical resolve that was afterwards to carry him through the journeys that lay ahead—yet again across the Kalahari and relentlessly northwest to Luanda, on the Atlantic coast, and then eastwards across the breadth of the continent to arrive at the Indian Ocean; followed by a protracted and tormented series of forays up, down, and around the hitherto unmapped river and lake systems of Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia, and Tanzania, in a misguided search for (among other things) the sources of the Nile. He died in 1873, near Lake Bangweulu, in Zambia. His African bearers packed his body with salt and carried it back to Bagamoyo, near Zanzibar, on the east coast of the continent, where they delivered it to the British authorities. The journey took them over five months to make, and it cost the lives of ten more members of the party.

The last of his homes in Botswana—the last home of any kind he was ever to know—was at a place called Kolobeng, to which he had persuaded Sechele to move with his people. I visited the site when I was recently in Botswana. Although it is only about twenty miles southwest of Gaborone (Botswana's present-day capital), I would never have been able to find it had I not had a companion, Stewart, who knew the district and had agreed to make this journey with me. Nothing is visible from the road to tell you that you have come to the right place: no huts, no houses, no roadside sign. Only when you have left the road at the brand-new bridge over the Kolobeng River, and walked about a hundred yards up the stony, red-soil slope, with still higher slopes to the south and east looking down on you, do you come to the remains of the Livingstone house. All that is to be seen there, behind a broken wire fence and a battered enamel sign, is a few rows of boulders hardly more than a couple of hand spans high. About twenty yards above these are the even rougher remains of what might have been a

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stable or workshop. Clusters of other rounded, half-buried boulders lying about the slope tease the eye with their resemblance to orders and arrangements made by men; then another look tells you that the ramps, traces, stepped pathways, and broken foundations which you think you see are merely phantoms, illusions, the work of your own imagination.

There is not the faintest trace of the huts of the people to whom Livingstone preached. They had not been built to last. Abandoning them must have come fairly easily to their builders, who had moved to Kolobeng from Chonwane at Livingstone's urging and had then moved further north once he had turned his back on them. Today, too, all over Botswana, abandoned huts of traditional design and materials can be seen going through the elaborately varied stages of their decay. First the thatch loses its firmness of outline; then it sags; then it thins like the hair on an aging man's head; then it gapes open to reveal a lattice-like cranium of curved roof poles below. Time passes and these poles too fall away; and the circular mud walls, open to the sky, erode from the top downwards, until only stumps are left. When they are gone, nothing remains. The poles are devoured by termites, the mud and grass return wholly to the soil from which they came.

In an early passage in his *Missionary Travels*, Livingstone gloomily remarked that he had found himself living in a land where "the very rocks are illiterate." Standing in front of the exiguous ruins of his house, I felt that I knew better than before what he had meant by this somber phrase. Apart from a small group of men working on the bridge over the Kolobeng River, my guide and I were alone. No houses or huts were to be seen in any direction. Only in the north, where the country was more open and plateau-like, a haze of smoke suggested that people were out there, somewhere. Of the stones around me, some were those that Livingstone had picked up with his hands and ranged in rows to shelter himself and his wife and children; they had defended him (meagerly) against the cold of winter nights and the savage heat of summer days. Yet how hard it was to distinguish them from all the other boulders lying on the cracked red carapace of the soil, scattered at random among the straggling thorn scrub, which had no human associations and had never been assimilated to any human purpose.

However, it is not only the ravages of time that have reduced Livingstone's house to nothing more than fragments. In 1852, while he was away on a journey to Cape Town, the British government made yet another of its spasmodic renunciations of interest in everything that went on to the north of the Cape Colony's borders. On receiving this news, so welcome to them, a commando of Boers, who had trekked to the Transvaal to get away from British rule, at once set out to crush Sechele and his people. They destroyed the Kwena settlement, which had been moved several miles upstream after Livingstone's departure with his family; they also killed many people, kidnapped some sixty children (to serve as "apprentices"), and drove off about a thousand head of cattle. But it was more than the prospect of loot that had sent the Boers out on this expedition. They had come to punish Sechele for turning to a British missionary for protection and also for failing to carry out the instruction they had curtly issued to him two years previously, which was that he should "stop all English travellers and traders proceeding to the North." It was their intention to shut off forever what Livingstone himself called "the *English path*" to the interior (his italics).

At some stage in the running battle that ensued, the empty Livingstone house was sacked. In his later writings he blamed the Boers; the Boers blamed Sechele's people; the truth is probably that both parties broke into it. (The enamel sign at the site follows the Livingstone line in putting all the blame on the Boers.) By the time he heard of the destruction of the house, Livingstone was on his way back from Cape Town, where he had gone to dispatch his wife and children "home" to Britain. He never returned to Kolobeng. He had had no intention of doing so, anyway, for in effect he had given up on Sechele's people, and on the rest of the Tswana too. "Dry bones" he called them, which would never fulfill the word of the prophet and come to life. By now his mind had turned irrevocably towards the making of journeys of exploration whose ends he himself could not foresee. Both in his polemical writings and his *Missionary Travels*, however, he used the sacking of his house and the plunder-

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ing of the native settlement to blacken indelibly the reputation of the Boers in the eyes of the British public. Among other things, he accused them of deliberately destroying his stock of Bibles. He also wrote, though not for general consumption, that he felt

quite grumpy when I think of a big fat Boeress lying on my sofa and drinking coffee out of my wife's coffeepot. Ugh! I suppose King Pretorius [the leader of the Boer commando] will write his despatches on my wife's writing desk.

Livingstone had acquired a true missionary hatred of the Boers shortly after arriving in Cape Town, and the longer he lived among the blacks the more anti-Boer he became.

These white thieves will find imitators among the blacks; and though now the boers think a Caffre's blood as the same value as that of a baboon, the time may not be distant when their own will be counted as cheap. When that day arrives, we may be spared to say, the outbreak is neither "unjust nor unprovoked."

There are many such formal anti-Boer anathemas in his writings; they are reinforced by offhand references in his letters and journals to Boers "embrued in human blood"; to Boers "being similar in character to those in Newgate [prison]"; to Boers "roaring out their hypocritical prayers"; to "dilly-dallying potbellied predikants." He even declares the Boers to be incapable of living in a "febrile region" because, he reports with undisguised pleasure, the fever "cuts down the fat people first, and Boers in general are stout."

Not that he spared the blacks, the Tswana-speaking peoples especially, the lash of his pen.

While [Sechele] was away from his town[,] Pillanie, another Bakwain chief, came to fight him, and finding nobody in his town but old men, women, and children, of course like a valiant Bechwana murders the most of these, burns the town, and seizes all the cattle. . . . [He is now] inflated by having acted so valiantly against the helpless women and children—I do not speak in irony, the murder of a child is in the eyes of a Motchuana a very brave deed, and they are not ashamed to boast of it afterwards. . . . The Lord is punishing the people of this land and making them a scourge to one another.

If a Morolong [a member of one of the Tswana tribes] kills a khoodoo he breaks out into a loud wail, "Oh, I have killed my father, what shall I do, yo yo yo yo." If asked why they do so, "It is our custom, we saw our forefathers do so & we do the same." They laugh at it. Have not the smallest devotional feeling, unless spitting on the ground when they see the animal after which their tribe is named can be denominated such an emotion.

As for that "sorry set," his fellow missionaries—there was, he wrote, "no more Christian affection between most if not all the 'brethren' & me than between my riding-ox and his grandmother." Even the Jews managed to draw his fire, though it is hard to think of a more remote target for him, in the circumstances. Making mock at one point of Sechele's European clothing (adopted partly to please Livingstone), he writes to a friend, "You would be amused to see his royal highness . . . [in] an old red coat and a few other duds the which if sold to a Jew in London would not realise 5/- [5 shillings]." At another point, complaining in his private journal of the mendacity, greed, stinginess, and filthiness invariably to be found among the Boers, he casually throws in the remark that they remind him more of the Jews than of any other people he has ever met. (A left and a right, as we might call it today.)

The members of his family, too, got it in the neck from time to time. Married to a daughter of Robert Moffat, a missionary at one time almost as celebrated as he was, he favored his father-in-law's much-admired volumes, *Missionary Labours*, with three epithets so insulting that some later hand heavily obliterated them. When his sister Janet copied a few verses into one of her letters, a furious Livingstone responded with half-a-dozen lines of contemptuous and slightly lewd doggerel of his own. Six months later, his anger still not abated, he went back to the subject.

No more of your poetry if you please, nay I command it; and if you again venture to fill up a letter with such everlasting nonsense, blethers strung up in rhyme, instead of what ought to be in it, you may expect a bull fulminated against your person.

He also pointed out to her that his "magnificent" letters were "perfect newspapers in size,"

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while hers were mere "ladies notes"; and, from the depths of Botswana, he repeatedly instructed her and the other members of the family on the importance of keeping their bowels open.

The finest writer of English prose to have dealt with southern African scenes? Well, in order to admire Livingstone as a writer, it is not necessary to find him an especially likeable person, or to trust his judgment, or to believe everything he says. Far from it. What one has to do is acknowledge that his powers of expression lent themselves not only to the ambiguous pleasures of vituperation but also (and often enough at the same time) to candor, curiosity, patience, exactness of observation, amusement, nonchalance, an amazing capacity for self-scrutiny in the midst of sufferings, and deprivations that would have silenced any other person.

Consider, for example, his famous description of the experience of being mauled by a lion:

> Growling horribly he shook me as a terrier dog does a rat. The shock produced a stupor similar to that which seems to be felt by a mouse after the first gripe of the cat. It produced a sort of dreaminess, in which there was no sense of pain or feeling of terror, though I was quite conscious of all that was happening. It was like what patients partially under the influence of chloroform describe, who see all the operation but feel not the knife. The shake annihilated all fear and allowed no sense of horror in looking round at the beast.

Or his account of the death of his baby daughter:

> Never concieved [*sic*] before how fast a little one can twine round the affections. She was just six weeks old. . . . I have not the smallest doubt that she is saved by the one whom she could not know. She is home now, yet it was like tearing out one's bowels to see her in the embrace of the King of Terrors. . . . She had very fine blue eyes.

Or consider the metaphoric power that enabled him to say of a declaration by the British forbidding slavery in the Transvaal: "As good as bolting the castle gate with a boiled carrot." Of a prominent figure in Cape Colonial politics: "His nose is bent round as if it were disgusted with itself." Of a newly married couple: "May they be a mutual blessing and never cat-and-dogify." Of the thorns on an acacia: "Most . . . are bent backwards like fish hooks, but there are like wise a goodly array of straight ones pointing in every direction, ready to do mischief both ways and all villainously sharp and strong." Of scavenger beetles pushing balls of dung: "Keeping their heads down they push with their hind legs, as if a boy should roll a snowball with his feet, while standing on his crown." Of a fellow missionary: "At present the shape he has is something between a sack of meal and a tar-bucket." Of a tree frog: "About half-an-inch long: [it] leaped on a grassy leaf, and began a tune as loud as that of many birds, and very sweet; it surprised me to hear so much music out of so small a musician." Of a species of large red ant: "On man they insert their sharp curved mandibles and then with six legs push their bodies round so as to force the points by lever power. . . . We put ashes on the defiant hordes. They retire to enjoy the fruits of their raid, and come out fresh another day." Of himself in a high fever: "Ideas flow through the mind with great rapidity and vividness, in groups of two and threes: if I look at any piece of wood, the bark seems covered over with figures and faces of men, and they remain, though I look away and turn to the same spot again."

Such an anthology could be extended almost indefinitely, from all phases of his career. The last three quotations are in fact taken from the journal he kept on his final, fatal journey. ("I saw myself lying dead on the way to Ujiji, and all the letters I expected there useless.") In their speed and spontaneity passages like these seem to me comparable with what we might expect to find in the work of the greatest writers—in Dickens, say, or D. H. Lawrence.

Of Kolobeng where, according to one of Livingstone's letters, lions "walk around the house at night," where hyenas "abound exceedingly," where buffaloes, zebras, and elephants "have left their traces"—of Kolobeng he also wrote that one day it would perhaps contain "only marks of the pleasant haunts of men." That prophecy has hardly been fulfilled.

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The animals have all gone, true; but so have the people. On the other hand, a new tarred road now runs past the ruins of his house. It is a fine road, one of the best I traveled on in Botswana, though also one of the most heavily disfigured with litter. For some reason it seemed to specialize in plastic bags. They lay in the verges; they thrashed and struggled to free themselves from the thornbushes; they puffed themselves out like balloons and rolled along briefly in the wake of the car; they even tried to block its passage with hopeless kamikaze tactics.

The road had been built to cut the journey time from Gaborone to the recently opened diamond mine at Jwaneng. One wonders what Livingstone would have made of it. Would he have thought of it as a pleasant haunt of men? As a victory for Christianity and Commerce?

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Jimmy

PETER DAILEY

There was a time in the mid-1960s when James Baldwin's face was better known than that of any writer since Hemingway. Pictures of Baldwin, staring at the camera with the unblinking solemnity of a wise adolescent, were displayed in bookshop windows and regularly appeared on the covers of magazines pinned to the front of newstands. His oddly photogenic features, in particular the widow's peak and prominent eyes, made him recognizable to vast numbers of people who had never read his novels or essays. Even in Istanbul, his home for most of the decade, he could not enter the bar of the Hotel Divan or make his way down Istiklâl Caddesi without heads turning, and he rarely got through an evening without being asked at least once for his autograph.

In 1963, Lionel Trilling acknowledged that "there is probably no literary career in America today that matches James Baldwin's in the degree of interest it commands." Alfred Kazin found his writing "radiantly intelligent" and described Baldwin as "an original literary talent who operates with as much power in the essay form as I've ever seen." Edmund Wilson pronounced Baldwin's work "most remarkable," and Stephen Spender hailed him as "one of the outstanding living writers in the English language." The response of the book-buying public was equally enthusiastic. *Nobody Knows My Name, Another Country,* and *The Fire Next Time* all occupied places on the *New York Times* best-seller list for months at a time and were translated into dozens of languages.

The high watermark of Baldwin's reputation came in 1962 with the serialization in *The New Yorker* of *The Fire Next Time.* Ostensibly an examination of Elijah Mohammed and the Black Muslim movement, the piece was an extended meditation on some of the abiding aspects of race relations in America and the way in which they had shaped Baldwin's own upbringing in Harlem twenty-five years earlier. A haunting and eloquent work, its influence was extraordinary. Norman Podhoretz described it as an "enduring achievement . . . an essay which deserves to be placed among the classics of our language . . . a statement of overwhelming persuasiveness and prophetic magnificence."

Baldwin's early fiction, in particular the New York chapters of *Go Tell It on the Mountain* and such stories as "The Outing," Baldwin's own favorite, though sparer and more circumspect than his essays, was also assured and accomplished. His largely forgotten play *The Amen Corner,* set in a Harlem storefront church, was very much in the same key. Harold Clurman praised the use of folk material, noting that "crucial passages are beautifully written, wrought of living speech from the mouths of the people whose very clichés somehow transform themselves into poetry."

In later years, the bad reviews of Baldwin's work came with such numbing regularity that it was sometimes difficult to remember what an unquestionably superb writer he once had been. To reread Baldwin's early work is to find abundant confirmation of his critics' initial estimate. As a young writer, he had quickly, effortlessly, found a unique voice, one derived in equal measure from Hemingway, the King James Bible, and Henry James. In the essays in *Notes of a Native Son* and *Nobody Knows My Name,* Baldwin interpreted the predicament of black Americans in a prose that, despite its subversive intent, was both lucid and resonant.

As the Civil Rights movement gathered mo-

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mentum, however, Baldwin's career began to take a new shape. For much of this period, his time was largely given over to engagements on campuses and in churches, where he spoke with fire and passion. These improvisatory speeches gave scope to the rhetorical gifts he had honed as an adolescent preacher in Harlem storefront churches, and he found in his audiences the same corroborating presence. "At the hot peak of the movement," Amiri Baraka recalled, "Jimmy was one of its truest voices." Baldwin had once noted in a damning review that Langston Hughes was "not the first American Negro to find the war between his social and artistic responsibilities all but irreconcilable," and although he continued to write, albeit in an increasingly erratic fashion, it was more and more apparent that he had arrived at the same quandary.

Many of Baldwin's friends and acquaintances would have agreed that to know him only through his writing was to know only a part of him, and often not the best part. Years after their friendship had ended, Norman Mailer, who had befriended the young Baldwin in Paris in the fifties, recalled that "Jimmy had an absolutely wonderful personality. . . . I don't think there was anyone in the literary world who was more beloved than Jimmy. He had the loveliest manners. And he had these extraordinary moods: he walked around with a deep melancholy when he was unhappy, and when things amused him it was wonderful to watch him laugh, because it came out of this sorrow he had."

This description, though apt, fails to suggest the incisiveness and self-assurance that were equally characteristic. A photograph from this period that appears on the cover of James Campbell's astute biographical study, *Talking at the Gates*, is a good deal truer to life. Framed against a Paris street corner, Baldwin inhales a cigarette held in the V of his fingers, one of a number of insouciant gestures that conveyed a high sense of homosexual style. His attention held by something out of the frame, his eyes wide in response to some unseen provocation, in a way that suggests boldness and the stirring of aggression. Anyone who had ever spent even a short amount of time with him would have recognized the warning signs and been wary of his deceptive nonchalance.

"Jimmy" (as he soon became even to casual acquaintances) was an urbane man with sophisticated manners, everything about whom—his repertoire of facial expressions, the modulations of his voice, his almost pedantic regard for syntactical correctness—was elegant, humorous, and playful. In conversation he possessed a very finely tuned ironic sense that found its way into his writing only intermittently. It compelled his friend William Styron to remark that with Baldwin he had felt "in the company of as marvelous an intelligence as I was ever likely to encounter."

Unlike many other notable conversationalists, Baldwin took unfeigned pleasure in the company around him and paid others a solicitous attention that was deeply flattering. A small man, usually the smallest in the room, his size seemed incongruous given his voice and presence. He argued with great tenacity, but was very quick to read non-verbal responses and, noticing a flicker of skepticism or mounting impatience, would artfully anticipate and forestall objections or dispel contentiousness with a sudden gap-toothed smile. One left his presence with a sense of intellectual exhilaration, even when, as was often the case, what had been said was fundamentally unconvincing.

In 1966, I was nineteen years old and working at an American school in Istanbul where I saw quite a bit of Baldwin. At a teahouse along the Bosphorus, where one would sometimes find him, his table, cluttered with brown beer bottles and liters of Turkish vodka, would be surrounded by friends, and each new arrival was greeted like the returning prodigal. The flow of conversation rarely flagged, animated by his apparently inexhaustible fund of exuberance and high spirits. Before we knew it, afternoon would lengthen into evening, bringing with it the uneasy sense of missed appointments or work neglected.

News of the United States, though several days old by the time the *International Herald-Tribune* arrived from Paris, was a continuing incitement. Jimmy's voice, analyzing the latest iniquities, was a supple and melodious instrument, conveying many shades of emphasis or incredulity. His ironic chuckle had something joyous about it. Though unholy deeds ravaged the world, as darkness settled over the hills on the Asia Minor side, he seemed full of the tranquil expectation that things could be set right.

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At some point near dusk the sound of a public address system coming on would send pigeons scattering from the minaret of a nearby mosque. The pop and crackle of static would be followed by scratches as a phonograph needle was dropped, and a recording of the muezzin's call began to play. One might suddenly look around and notice that lanterns had been put out, the moon had risen, and the ferry crisscrossing the strait had passed for the dozenth time.

The Baldwin story, to which he returned throughout his career, is one of the great American autobiographies. The reality—one of eight children of a welfare family, living in railroad flats east of Lenox Avenue, an area of Harlem regarded as deplorable even then, the uncomprehending object of the pathological rages of a stepfather whose spiritual pride alienated the family from its neighbors—seems if anything to have been even grimmer than his many accounts would suggest. Indeed, anyone who met the Baldwin family in his apartment on West Seventy-first Street, in the years after his fame was established, must have wondered at the contrast between these close-knit, attractive, and affectionate brothers and sisters and the harrowing stories of their upbringing.

In 1967, I was back in New York at Columbia College and, when Baldwin returned on business for an extended visit, our acqaintanceship was renewed. At home, as well as abroad, he surrounded himself with a heterogeneous assortment of people; a beautiful actress starring on Broadway might be talking to a young man still wearing the clothes in which he had been released from prison earlier in the week. Baldwin had the ability to turn them all into accomplices. As the news that Baldwin was back in New York spread, a constant stream of friends and acquaintances dropped by. Hours would pass; a record of Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin, or Miles Davis would play over and over in the background, often because everyone was too absorbed in conversation to get up and change it, the music reiterated so insistently that to hear it years later would be to summon back that particular evening with a remarkable vividness.

This unending celebration was enough to convince almost everyone who took an interest in Baldwin that a prolonged residence abroad was essential if he was to write at all. His life in Europe, however, followed much the same pattern. Baldwin, who was not an early riser, generally did whatever work he was capable of in the small hours after the last guests had reluctantly departed. To assume that this routine had a demoralizing effect on Baldwin would be to fail to take his measure. Although he might have benefited from a less chaotic way of living, it does not appear that he ever had one. Indeed, he seemed to be unconsciously reproducing the disorder that, since childhood, had been an inseparable aspect of domesticity. To imagine him living otherwise would be to imagine a different person.

He was one of the most accessible of individuals, possessed of a generous nature and a large fund of intellectual tolerance. He was capable of rare tact and laudable acts of kindness. Although his comments about his literary contemporaries often had a touch of asperity to them, with young writers he showed an exemplary patience.

He also had a number of less agreeable traits. He was notoriously unreliable and frequently heedless of the consequences to others. A good part of Campbell's book and W. J. Weatherby's *James Baldwin: Artist on Fire* recounts appointments he failed to keep, dinners with friends for which he never showed up, deadlines missed, projects undertaken that were never completed.

Baldwin also had a very short fuse. The obtuseness of liberals, whose incomprehension and facile optimism he regarded as a form of cowardice, infuriated him. The experience of listening to Baldwin, glowering ominously and shaking an admonitory finger, left Robert Kennedy, according to one witness, purple with fury. At times, Baldwin's anger seemed a salutary corrective and was expressed with such fluency and inventiveness as to compel admiration. There were many other occasions, however, when a justifiable impatience gave way to something akin to what he had described as his stepfather's "apocalyptic, often incoherent rage."

Perhaps the principal reminder of Baldwin's earlier life in the Harlem tenements was the presence of his mother, who lived upstairs. The shadow his stepfather casts over his writing is a large one. His mother on the other hand—with the exception of the wonderful portrait in *Go Tell It on the Mountain*—figures

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in his work only tangentially. Mrs. Baldwin was the sort of older black woman, raised in the South under the old dispensation and never altogether believing in the new one, whose reserve made it very difficult for white people ever to know her well. She seems to have been something of an enigma even to her offspring. In addition to raising nine children under heroic circumstances, she worked as a cleaning woman, continuing, in the face of Baldwin's mounting exasperation, long after any financial necessity for doing so remained. It is interesting to learn from James Campbell's book that when the principal of Baldwin's Harlem elementary school was asked twenty-five years later for her recollections of the writer, she said that she retained a clearer memory of Mrs. Baldwin than of any other mother and that her letters to the school had been so felicitously expressed that teachers used to marvel over them.

Although Mrs. Baldwin was a gentle, deeply impressive woman, beneath her surface placidity was a febrile quality, which Baldwin shared. There was about him a note of complexity that was distinct and unsettling. While in many ways he was as tough as nails, he had an air of fragility, of having been irreparably wounded by a traumatic upbringing that was not altogether a pose. It is one of a number of aspects that biographical writing about him has thus far failed to eludicate.

Evenings at the Baldwins' were sometimes interrupted by word that Jimmy's mother had prepared fried chicken, or, if the party had lasted all night, a breakfast of bacon and eggs. From the hall stairway, as people filed back and forth between Mrs. Baldwin's kitchen and Jimmy's living room, shouts of laughter or of someone stubbornly trying to cap an argument and of Baldwin's profane rejoinder were audible. Although his affection for other people could be deep and constant, the extraordinary loyalty and concern Baldwin inspired in his friends was often of an intensity that exhausted itself rather quickly. There was, frequently, a disquieting recognition that the conflicting aspects of his temperament could not be reconciled in any satisfactory way; that it was a mistake to rely on him for anything and pointless to take offense at the continual misunderstandings from which he invariably emerged in a poor light. Even casual acquaintances came to see that the disorder of his life, which once might have seemed engaging and spontaneous, was, in fact, deeply destructive.

I remember having such thoughts going home from a party that had started on Broome Street and that, after stops at several bars, ended at Baldwin's apartment. It was 7:00 A.M. Overnight the biggest snowstorm of the year had fallen, and I had to make my way to Broadway in the tracks of the snowplow. Although he lived for another twenty years, that was the last time I saw Jimmy. While some of his friendships survived lengthy periods of estrangement, his family was ultimately his only touchstone. For all of this, he left a lasting impression on a great many people, for whom he remains, years later, a vivid if ghostly presence.

There are few situations in which reviewers are less forgiving than when a writer's celebrity has outlived his talent. *Another Country* in 1962 prefigured Baldwin's later failures. "No one of his natural delicacy of mind and ear," Trilling complained, "should write as badly as Mr. Baldwin does in this book." Podhoretz, while insisting on the novel's importance, acknowledged that it was "faulty to a degree that would wreck a work of lesser force and intensity and truthfulness." As Styron suggested, it may have been the first book in which Baldwin recognized that he was not in total command of what he was trying to do.

Beginning with the publication of *Blues for Mr. Charlie* in 1964, the critical reception of Baldwin's books was almost entirely negative. The defects apparent in *Another Country* and *The Fire Next Time* became increasingly active and disabling; familiar stylistic mannerisms were frequently pushed to the point of self-parody. *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone,* Irving Howe wrote, was a "remarkably bad novel, signalling the collapse of a writer of some distinction." James Campbell concurs, noting that Baldwin's "voice broke, and it affected every element of his literary style—his rhythm, his syntax, his vocabulary, the way in which he made discriminations and reached judgments." Too often, in spite of some remarkable passages and flashes of acute psychological insight, the books Baldwin produced during the last twenty years of his life only seemed to confirm his earlier judgment of protest fiction: that it was a "mirror of our confusion, dishonesty and panic."

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For the remainder of Baldwin's career, he occupied a curiously anomalous position. Although he was the recipient of honorary degrees, a Chevalier of the Légion d'Honneur, and the subject of doctoral dissertations, his work no longer seemed to merit serious critical notice. It is possible to imagine an anthology of five hundred pages, drawn largely, though not exclusively, from his early work, that might prompt a more nuanced judgment of his career and at the very least remind readers why he was once regarded as a distinctive voice, why he seemed to bring such critical and moral authority to his particular historical moment. As it was, the collapse of his reputation was so total that his last book, *The Evidence of Things Not Seen*, took almost two years to find a publisher. When his collected nonfiction, *The Price of the Ticket*, on which his reputation ultimately will rest, appeared in 1985, it not only failed to prompt the appraisals and reappraisals of a career that such collections usually call forth, it scarcely attracted any notice at all. The daily *New York Times* neglected to review it, and the *New York Times Book Review* dismissed it with a paragraph.

That Baldwin was unable to sustain the level of his earliest and finest work is not, in and of itself, especially remarkable. It is a great deal easier, certainly, to say what his failure consisted in than to give any persuasive reason for it. The fact of his rootlessness, however, seems enormously suggestive. His exile—for this was the way he chose to regard his decision as a young writer to settle in Paris—was, at least initially, an extremely fruitful and productive one, since he was thrown back on what he knew most intimately: the Harlem of the thirties and forties. "I began to try to re-create the life I had first known as a child," he recalled later, "and from which I had spent so many years in flight." This was the only social milieu over which he had an absolute command, and he turned it to good account almost immediately.

He spent the rest of his life writing about or around this great theme of his early life. Regardless of the ostensible pretext, a great many of Baldwin's books eventually arrive at a long retrospective passage, during which Baldwin, or his preternaturally articulate narrator, recalls the experience of growing up in Harlem. Although the tide of nostalgia in these accounts is in full flood, for the most part, they are hard-edged and unsentimental. His tone is one of deep melancholy and ruefulness. Harlem, for Baldwin, seemed to exist in a timeless continuum, as though outside of history. It is clear that for him the act of remembering, the recovery of each detail of urban desolation, paradoxically meant the reconstruction of a heavenly city. These rhapsodic recollections provide the few bright moments in such works as *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone* and *Just Above My Head*. No other subjects that he attempted—the meaning of sexuality and its transforming nature, the South in the post–Civil Rights era, the criminal justice system, or the contexts in which they were placed, Greenwich Village, the homosexual demimonde of Paris, the sort of no-man's-land he inhabited as a celebrity—possessed for him the same luminosity.

Baldwin himself seemed aware of the problematical course of his career and the extent to which he was trapped by the persona he had created. The fiction he came eventually to write was unlike that of virtually all of his contemporaries. F. W. Dupee was one of many critics to note Baldwin's "rather specialized literary role," that of the "Negro in extremis," the "virtuoso of ethnic suffering, defiance and aspiration." The role that Baldwin had "taken on so deliberately and played with so agile an intelligence," Dupee suggested, "is one that no white writer could possibly imitate and that few Negroes, I imagine, would wish to embrace as a whole."

This identity evolved in a largely unforeseen way. In 1955, in his introduction to *Notes of a Native Son*, Baldwin ventured that he had written about being a Negro at such length not because he expected it to be his only subject, but because "it was the gate I had to unlock before I could hope to write about anything else." He was mistaken: the "Negro Question" was to occupy him for the rest of his life.

He frequently spoke of himself as a "witness," a role that came naturally to him. Forty years after he had left the church, the attributes of literature that rose unprompted to his mind remained those of the Pentecostal sermons he had heard as a boy and later delivered as a young preacher, in particular the use of personal testimony and the illustrative parable. Like other writers of a strongly autobiographical bent, his deepest literary impulse was to wrest meaning from what he had expe-

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rienced and remembered; however, unlike others, he sought to describe its reverberations in a way that illuminated larger social realities.

This approach involved some self-imposed constraints and meant ignoring much that was unique about his own experience. (*Giovanni's Room*, a deeply flawed novel in which he courageously insisted on his own singularity, suggests the course his work might have taken.) It also, inevitably, entailed some distortion. Albert Murray argued that in writing of the Negro tradition, Baldwin never recognized "any of its sustaining actualities," and that the Harlem described by James Baldwin could not possibly have produced a James Baldwin. Nevertheless, in his best and finest essays—"Notes of a Native Son," his account of the death of his father, and parts of *The Fire Next Time*—he negotiated this difficult terrain with a remarkable sense of balance.

To take up what he described as the black writer's "burden of representation," to insist, in the face of its manifest unlikelihood, on himself as a representative figure, he clearly believed, was inescapable if only because white America was incapable of regarding him in any other way. To speculate about the imaginative deterioration that subsequently took place or the deadness that is felt in so much of his later work is to be left with the paradox he framed in the introduction to *Notes of a Native Son*: "It is quite possible to say that the price a Negro pays for becoming articulate is to find himself, at length, with nothing to be articulate about ('You taught me language,' says Caliban to Prospero, 'and my profit on't is I know how to curse.')"

It was not solely Baldwin's bad writing, however, that gave offense. There was nothing ingratiating about his failure. It was accompanied by a marked change in tone, which became increasingly uncongenial. Campbell notes of his later work that the "hallmarks of Baldwin's moral outlook—equivocation, ambivalence, doubt—have all but vanished." From 1968 on, his deepening pessimism and anger seemed less concentrated, his public statements less temperate and discriminating. He seemed very much out of sync with the times, and poorly informed about a great many things. His state of mind, his friend Dr. Kenneth Clark suggested, resembled that of W. E. B. Du Bois during his last decade of exile.

Although Baldwin had admitted earlier that to create a nation out of a multi-racial society was "a hideously difficult task," one moreover that had scarcely been started, he now gave the impression of a profound estrangement—a conviction that America lacked the capacity for significant or lasting transformation. Often, he appeared to doubt whether such a transformation was even desirable. His work fueled the cycle of accusations and recriminations between the African-American activists and intellectuals and their white former allies in the Civil Rights movement that twenty-five years later is still a long way from being played out.

Few careers of the post–Civil Rights period illustrate quite as tellingly the desperate nature of what Harold Cruse termed the crisis of the Negro intellectual. Baldwin's response to the intractability of America's racial problems was to retreat into those ideological certitudes with which as a young writer he had been notoriously impatient. Although his opinions had often seemed exaggerated or wrongheaded, they had never before been so predictable. His large untidy failure, and the irrelevance and inconsequentiality that followed it, seemed far more than a literary failure.

For many James Baldwin was an inconvenient and unfashionable reminder of the sixties. As a Civil Rights spokesman, he suffered the fate of the Civil Rights movement itself, eclipsed by figures whose reputations proved to be even more transitory than his own, whose anger was more facile, whose statements about the racial situation were simpler and less intellectually and morally troubling.

Baldwin once said that the attacks of white people got his blood up, but that when black people attacked him, it made him want to cry. Although he continued to spend much of his time at his home at St. Paul-de-Vence in the hills outside of Nice, for most of the last fifteen years of his life he seemed to be seeking an imaginative reconciliation with African-American life and culture, about which his earlier ambivalence had never been entirely resolved.

One of the forms this took was a process of accommodation with his black critics. For many of them, his earlier insistence that "both camps have managed to evade the really hideous complexity of our situation on the social and personal level," or that there is "some-

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thing suspicious about the way we cling to the concept of race, on both sides of the obsolescent racial fence," had marked him as a collaborator. Their criticism was accompanied by a great deal of personal contempt, directed at his homosexuality, his literariness, and his friendships with whites. As he searched for common ground, Baldwin's remarks about his ideological opponents became increasingly circumspect. Early in his career, he had distinguished himself as a trenchant critic of black thought. His essays had been insistent and provocative, as unsparing of what he once called "the peculiar form of complacency sometimes known as Negro militancy" as they were of liberals and accommodationists. Protective of his autonomy as a writer, he had been skeptical of the currents and fads of black and liberal opinion, and suspicious of heavy-handed attempts to induce conformity in the name of black unity or spurious notions of black "authenticity."

By the mid-seventies, this turn of mind was increasingly less evident. On those occasions when he returned to New York, figures who had once derided him as a "white man's Negro" were now his companions on bar-hopping expeditions that lasted late into the night. His desire for broad uncritical acceptance from the most vocal segments of African-American life was accompanied by a conspicuous inability to come to grips with such issues being raised in the seventies as black feminism or the predicament of other black homosexuals—issues that he regarded as irrelevant and divisive. These problems failed to engage his imagination in part because he chose to see them simply as aspects of white domination.

Baldwin genuinely believed that unless driven by social or economic compulsion, most black people were incapable of acting in the ignoble, fearful, and dishonest way that the increasingly vocal testimony of women and gays suggested they sometimes did. If complicity in transparent acts of oppression had debased the humanity of most whites, blacks had emerged from that experience wiser and braver, readier to accept whatever life brought. The ultimate repository of the qualities that had sustained black people through their long night in Egypt was the black family in its various configurations. The example of his own family, which had triumphed over so much, was testimony to that fact. (It is doubtful whether Baldwin ever recognized how similar the role he posited for the black family was to that of the black church, the only perfect community he had ever known.)

When taxed with this explicit formulation, Baldwin attempted to disavow it. "I'm not claiming that black people are better than white people," he told Julius Lester. "We treat each other just the way the rest of the human race treats itself. Abominably." Few readers of his last novels would have been convinced by this disclaimer. In each of them we see the celebration around the sacred fires of the Israelites who had crossed over into Canaan.

He spent much of the last two decades of his life trying to come to grips with what America had become in the post–Civil Rights period. Was there really any significant difference from what he had known forty years before? This was a judgment that he was ill-equipped by education, temperament, outlook, and now even geography to make. Baldwin's imagination was prophetic, rather than historical, and his work presented, in striking form, the virtues and limitations of the prophetic mode. To refuse to acknowledge the often dramatic transformation in racial attitudes that had taken place was to risk sounding at best tendentious, and at worst foolish. At the same time, the plight of the black urban poor—the people he was most intimately connected with—was far more desperate than what he had known as a boy in Harlem.

A situation that was better in some ways and worse in others would have struck him as no change at all; change required a healing and redemptive catharsis. At the conclusion of one filmed interview, Baldwin tells his interlocutor: "I do believe [his voice dropping an octave for emphasis], I really do believe . . . in the New Jerusalem, I really do believe that we can all become better than we are, I *know* we can, but the price is enormous and people are not yet willing to pay." His profound pessimism was one of the truest, most honest, and most admirable things about him. The mood of liberal optimism that saw the emergence of the small black middle class as evidence that American society operated in a fundamentally just and ameliorating way was for him a new manifestation of an old delusion. He could conceive of no lasting change without a transformation of the human heart. His last work,

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The Evidence of Things Not Seen, an investigation of the serial murder of twenty-eight children in Atlanta in 1981, a book that even his remaining admirers found disappointing, hewed to this position with a certain weariness and no illusions about persuading anyone, but with an intellectual tenacity that was impressive.

W. H. Auden, one of the few modern poets whose work meant anything to Baldwin, observed that: "Time . . . / worships language / and forgives / everyone by whom it lives." The amount of critical and biographical writing on Baldwin is by now considerable. If he is remembered, it almost certainly will not be as a novelist; however, other claims for him are not so easily dismissed. Baldwin's virtues as a writer were intermittently present to the end of his career. In none of this work, no matter how slipshod or crudely polemical, does his touch entirely desert him; even the most routine journalistic assignments were occasionally illuminated by a strikingly apt phrase or insight.

When Baldwin looked at black life in America, he saw the process of social disintegration at work; he warned that many black people had "long since ceased believing a word we say—about honor, ideals, equality, hope," and he recognized the implications. The prospect of the fire next time was something that he came eventually to welcome. "If I'm to be honest," he told one interviewer, "—one can't but feel, no matter how deeply one distrusts the feeling, that the holocaust, the total levelling, salvation by fire, 'no remission of sins save by the shedding of blood,' may be the only hope." What Baldwin did not foresee was that this nihilistic fury would be turned inward. Unquestionably, as time passes, the initial correctness of his judgments is bound to matter less than the way his writings illuminate his time, bringing controversies and events into moral relief. This his best work did in a vivid and eloquent way. It is altogether a sadder and more troubling story than the one he had hoped he would one day write.

In the pictures that appeared in the press with progressively less frequency during the 1980s, the gray-haired novelist, showing signs of incipient stoutness, seemed like a clever, not entirely convincing, impersonation of his exotic, mercurial younger self. With the death of Martin Luther King, Jr., and the decline of the Civil Rights movement, Baldwin seemed, as W. J. Weatherby notes in *James Baldwin: Artist on Fire*, less intense and combative than he had been formerly, more subdued and pensive. While he gave the impression of being a remarkably integrated personality, he also had a rather narrow compass. He was not a person of especially broad intellectual interests and was, in fact, notably incurious about a great many things. Even about black music, which figured so largely in his writing, he was not particularly knowledgeable; what drew his attention were the lyrics, which he regarded as an oral history of black people. To the music itself he often seemed strangely unresponsive. He had no hobbies or enthusiasms apart from his work and his intense interest in people. He was singularly unacquisitive, inhabiting a series of half-furnished houses, and generally giving the impression of living out of a suitcase. The sense of disengagement he felt for his places of exile was unusual. It is not clear whether by the end of his long residence in Istanbul he knew enough Turkish to buy a pack of cigarettes.

He was drinking more than ever and no longer possessed the equilibrium that had once carried him through speeches and public appearances. His grasp of what he had earlier described as "the stony and ruthless perception which will allow (one) to stand at once within and without his fearful notoriety" seemed to have loosened. He was not immune from self-aggrandizing impulses, moods in which he could describe himself as "in some ways the last unassassinated Negro of my generation," or an unbecoming solemnity about his celebrity, which increased as his actual importance waned. From time to time he described for journalists novels and plays in progress, invariably with marvelous titles, and occasionally he managed to collect large advances. But for the last five years of his life, he appears to have been incapable of sustained or purposeful work.

People who saw him in his later years reported that his extraordinary charm remained undiminished. Campbell recalls that "he retained all his fluency, his originality, his beguiling articulacy, his wit." He was almost totally reliant on a circle of loyal and protective friends, for which there were always new recruits. His chaotic domestic arrangements seemed of a piece with his intensely volatile personality. It was a disorder, finally, that was

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essential since it created the web of dependency that connected people to him.

A line from a Pentecostal hymn recurs a number of times in his last published writing: "My soul looks back and wonders how it got over." What this meant to a person as resolutely secular as Baldwin is something of a puzzle. That he had become a writer at all, when everything was pushing him toward what he called the "death of working in the post office for 37 years . . . the death of going under and watching your family go under," seemed to him a mystery as inexplicable as any celebrated in the church. And considering the way he had managed or mismanaged his life, his death at sixty-three in 1987 could not be said to be an early one; for many it was a matter for wonder that Baldwin had lived that long.

His funeral at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York was an unexpectedly moving event, which even his eulogists' extravagant assessments of his work and character did little to diminish. Perhaps the single most striking image in W. J. Weatherby's account is of the forty-car funeral procession as it made its way down the hill from the Cathedral and through Harlem, past the neighborhoods that Baldwin had left forty-five years before, to the cemetery in Westchester. Although at the time of his death he was one of Harlem's most famous sons, how many of those who paused on Lenox Avenue that winter afternoon to watch the limousines with smoked windows go by knew who was being honored, or would even have recognized Baldwin's name? What was unmistakable to all, however, was that this somber pomp marked out someone who had "gotten over."

Sexist Poem

DIANA DER-HOVANESSIAN

Poems have neither sex nor age.
The true poet's praise and rage
are genderless upon the page,

impossible to identify,
except of course by a woman's eye!

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Notes on the Poststructural Code

BERT O. STATES

> *It is necessary to state the other in the language of the Same; . . . it is necessary to think* true *exteriority as non-*exteriority *. . . without being interiority.*
>
> —Jacques Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics"

A great deal has been written about poststructuralism, but its own discourse seems to have escaped serious scrutiny, apart from the odd complaint about its impenetrability by intolerant outsiders. I suggest that a modest beginning can be made if we treat the discourse as a code in its own right. For it has clearly achieved the main characteristics of a code: a distinctive vocabulary, its own sound, its own ideology, and its own set of proverbs ("there is nothing outside the text," "the text has always already dismantled itself," "the unconscious is structured like a language," and so on).

It is a rare pleasure to watch a code emerging because it is an event that occurs only once or twice in a lifetime, much like the visit of a comet. Codes make long evolutionary voyages through the cultural heavens, creating themselves, as the late Fred Hoyle might have put it, out of the friction of our (mis)understandings—which is to say, of our ideologies. Unlike the comets, however, their dates of arrival are impossible to determine, since recognition is invariably a delayed awareness of something that has already taken place. As an even older proverb goes, "You don't hear the shot that kills you." We have all had the experience of one day noticing that a heretofore inconspicuous, if not forgotten, word—*reify, valorize, discourse*—is unaccountably appearing with unusual regularity, like the rats in Camus's Oran. Soon we are hearing it everywhere, and we wonder how all of this came about and what it can possibly mean. This is one of the signs of a code naturalizing itself, passing, as it were, through the resistance of an (always) already coded atmosphere. And, in due course, we come to realize that this is how we are now speaking.

What is this new code? Suffice to say that any list of its terms would only invite emendations from readers who would want to add their own favorite words that the list had overlooked. As a general indication of the range and quality of the code's vocabulary, however, we might mention a few of the more prominent terms: *abîme (mise en), agenda, aporia, articulate, closure, code (en-, -ify), colonize, co-opt, crisis, dominant, essentialize, Gaze, genderize, hegemony, marginalize, narrative, position (to), presence, problematize, scandal,* and *utterance.* Unquestionably, the next order of business would be a glossary of code terms on the order of Raymond Williams's admirable little volume *Keywords.* Among other things, such an endeavor might demonstrate more precisely how each code term is at once a fragment of ideology and of methodology—both an attitude and a tool, as it were—and how each maintains a supporting "loyalty" to the others (the sign of a true code) whereby the appearance of one or two words virtually guarantees the swift arrival of others, much as Robin Hood's merry men suddenly appear out of an empty forest at the sound of his horn. But let us move quickly to some of the code's characteristics.

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The first thing to be said is that no single word, with perhaps a few exceptions (*abîme?*), belongs exclusively to the code. In fact, what is immediately apparent in any list of code terms is the high incidence of words drawn from the sphere of capitalistic economy and politics (*marginalization, co-optation, exchange, commodification, negotiate, colonize, valorize, economy* itself, and so on), an extraordinary case of the appropriation of "the enemy's" resources and practices. Perhaps the key strategy in this operation is what I will call "Pre-suffixed Retextualization," or in George Orwell's term from a simpler era, "-izing": meaning that words outside the code can be co-opted by a single maneuver. This consists of attaching a prefix and/or a suffix to the root of any self-contained word that is going about its business in the marketplace of meaning. The prefix part of the operation (*pre-*, *anti-*, *ex-*, *re-*, *post-*, *meta-*, *counter-*, and so forth) is a kind of stun gun that instantly decommissions the word, preempting—or to cite a more colorful code word, *plundering*—its meaning (as the letter *s* in a game of Scrabble will plunder and appropriate *cat* and thereby produce *scat*); meanwhile the suffix slips up behind with handcuffs, so to speak, and institutionalizes the word (for example, *scat-ology*), bringing to an end any claims it may have had to a feline identity of its own—identity (this "scandalous illusion of presence") being, far and away, the most virulent of the assumptions the code seeks ideologically to dismantle.

But to return to my point: a coded use of a word is always one that involves the cooperation of other code terms. For instance, *code* is not normally a code term (as in "The dress code this evening is tie and jacket") any more than *agenda* is a code word if we speak of the agenda of the meeting or ask "What's on the agenda tonight?" It becomes a code word only when it appears in a nest of code words; for it is the interplay—or, as the code would say, the recontextualization—of the terms that announces the code, as in the following examples:

- The persistent consolidation of claims to founding catachreses involves an incessant re-coding of diversified sectors of value.
- What is articulated is a rupture of the code of governmentality at the moment of its enunciation of authority.
- The agenda of phallo-cultural ideology is non-negotiable.
- In any moment of rehistoricized utterance, the dominant agenda is always radicalized as a crisis of the Sign.
- The phallogocentric agenda invariably foregrounds male surplus, thus colonizing the space of the feminine lack and perpetuating the identarian narrative.

Even if you had just got in from Manitoba, you could recognize this as coded language of some sort. Indeed, like those intrepid World War II code breakers who needed only to find the code value of a single dominant vowel (say, *e*) in order to decode a message, you could almost reconstruct the entire code from one of these rich usages alone. What gives these utterances their coded effect, however, is not just that one recognizes the words as belonging to the same code but the code's scrupulous avoidance of any word that makes an appeal to the mind's eye. The result is that the utterance succeeds in anesthetizing that part of the brain normally used to conjure images of what we are reading. Orwell complained in 1946 that such abstraction was not only poor writing but a political strategy for naming ugly realities "without calling up mental pictures of them." But then Orwell, in 1946, could hardly have anticipated developments that would one day justify such language as the only valid way to describe *the world perceived as a text*—that is, a world that has neither exterior nor interior but is exactly as thick as the sheet of paper it is written on. So any image, any mental picture at all, would betray the code by authenticating the very notion the code is devoted to subverting—chiefly, in the words of J. Hillis Miller, "the fiercely maintained and yet manifestly absurd theory of mimetic representation."

This leads us directly to another postulate: as Roland Barthes says of all political, didactic, or religious language, the code "never question[s] the repetition of [its own] utterances." For part of the character of the code is that it rejects outright the principle of the synonym, which is at best little more than a paranoiac hedge against boredom. However, this notion requires further comment: while new terms are constantly being added to the code to keep it, as we say, at the "cutting edge" of the cultural dialectic, and other terms frequently

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become obsolete with respect to their mission-readiness, synonyms are rarely invoked, unless as an accidental consequence of the code terms themselves having overlapping meanings (as in *satellitization* and *marginalization*). One could claim that this is, in itself, a form of built-in synonymetry, but if so it is surely about as frugal as the dessert menu in a Trappist monastery. In any event, what is precisely missing from coded language—and this is a point Orwell widely misunderstood—is the need to be interesting. Hearing the same words (for example, *discourse*, *text*, or *hegemony*, to cite three ubiquitous code words) over and over is not a problem—provided one is inside the code—because the terms are aesthetically inert, their interest absolutely exhausted in their mission of demonstrating the code doing its work of recontextualizing other codes. Thus the code has much in common with the Hari Krishna chant that achieves its remarkable mesmeric purity through a deliberate poverty of invention. One would no more think of varying the term *hegemony* or *utterance* or *discourse* in the interest of novelty than a surgeon would think of saying "Cutlery please" when what is wanted is a scalpel.

In passing, I might cite a personal experience with a near exception to this rule. A central code term is the word *scandal*, a word so deliciously poised between parliament and the bedroom, between politics and sexuality (certainly the most fecund intersection in the poststructuralist era) that some predicted it would die from the fatigue of overuse. Wouldn't code users themselves eventually tire of hearing that everything was a *scandal*? And in fact, at one point in my research I happened almost simultaneously upon a half-dozen independent occurrences of the word *shame* and *shameful* (for example: "the shame of revisionary historiography since Feuerbach," and "interrogation of the shameful myth of regenderized concretization," and so forth), together with what I took, at the time, to be an odd abatement of the term *scandal* and its derivatives. Here, I thought, was surely an instance of code sloughing, if not synonymic evolution, which would suggest that the code was not as spartan as I had assumed. Not so! It was only an instance of *co*-incidence: *shame* died on the vine, and I soon noticed a recrudescence of *scandal* (if it had ever left), as if the code had merely shaken off a mild flu.

I should say at once that more is at stake in this no-synonym rule than clarity. In fact, *clarity* is precisely the wrong word to use in speaking of the code's mission. Rather, it bears on the natural need of a code to remain free of contamination. The formulaic use of the terminology apparently fosters confidence, uniformity, and brotherhood among code users. For this is not the discourse of communication or the discourse of rapprochement, of dialogue and negotiation, of speaking to the enemy, but a discourse of radical self-isolation. The code's value consists simply in being displayed by insiders for insiders, much like the ornamental dance of certain birds. Clarity is beside the point: what, after all, is there to be clear about, since all so-called "ideas" are only context-dependent logocentric re-inscriptions plundered from another discourse—in effect, re-tautologizations? The point is rather "to state the other in the language of the Same," as Derrida puts it. For example, if one were to use common "street" words such as *describe* or *define* as synonyms for a reliable code warhorse such as *articulate* (as in: "To articulate the space of Eros is simply to dis-articulate the space of Thanatos," or "Any articulation of the dominant paradigm can only repeat the scandal of its phallocentrism"), the code itself would be endangered. Consider the pathetic flat-footedness of "To *define* the space of Eros is merely to *re-define* . . . et cetera." Here two counter styles, two ways of conceiving the world—Old Thought versus Post Thought—are jammed incompatibly into each other, like a forced bone graft. One part (the urge to define—that is, *to be clear*) wants to grow outward into the easy reaches of the Rationalist fallacy—to find, so to speak, a street address for the event—while the other part struggles, like Socrates' black horse, to articulate the truth of indeterminacy and the dark understanding that the *abîme* awaits, and that rupture is always already eating at the marrow of presence. Thus the synonym is anathema to the code. Allow one synonym, and soon the temptations of Imagination would take seed, competition would surface in the serene space of ritual, team spirit would decline, uniformity would become rampant *self*-cooptation, and the code, so doubly seconded with identarian will and power, would at last, like the universal wolf, eat itself up.

I may have led the reader to believe that the

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"aesthetic inertness" of the code implies that the code possesses no beauties of its own. Far from it. In fact, if the reader has followed me with any interest to this point, I may now make a critical observation: the code is a shrewd and deliberate com-position of virtually antithetical vocabularies that meet not in mere oppugnancy, as one might expect, but in a deeply fused harmony, as in the poetry of Wallace Stevens, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and certain passages of Donne. The first (and largest) consists in words drawn from the vocabulary of the "business" world (*commodification*, for example), which are what we may call the Marxian workhorses, or the pro(logo)teriat, of the code and about which I've doubtless said enough. The other is what I will refer to (in deference to the code's undisputed *seigneur*) as the vocabulary of the "Derridian aristocracy"—not by any means in the raw hegemonic sense of "aristocracy"; I intend the word merely to catch the flavor of a rich and valued past that is reified in the code. These are words drawn from the languages (Latin, French, German, and Greek), from poetry and various archaic sources ranging from mythology to medieval medicine and heraldry to modern Romance: *mise en abîme, map, aporia, epistemé, Gaze, phallus, plenitude, pharmakon, purloin, plunder, logos, scandal, utterance, lack,* and so on. They are, in short, the melody that keeps the code from droning. Thus the archaic (and therefore poststructural) beauty of *purloin* and *plunder* side by side with their cruder Marxian epigones *co-opt* and *appropriate.* But it is the collision of the vocabularies (the duplicitous "seam" between them, as Barthes would say) that produces the code's unique sound. *Purloin* in Poe is one thing, *purloin* in Lacan another: *purloin* in Poe smokes a meerschaum and wears a gray felt hat and muffler on a dull, dark, and soundless autumn day; *purloin* in Lacan stands at a blackboard scrawled with algorithms and toys with the stub of a twisted cigar (as in Pericoli's famous portrait).

There is one major beauty of the code that occurred to me first as a whimsy; then it became ineluctably clear that it was not a whimsy at all but a central attraction of the code: it seems to me that the code's almost religious citation of Jacques Lacan, Roland Barthes, and Jacques Derrida, not to mention Michel Foucault, Louis Althusser, Paul de Man, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and Hélène Cixous, has as much to do with the sound of their names as with the profundity of their ideas. How does it come about that all these figures, these stable anchors of the code's authority, these royal artificers of its style, have such neat mellifluous names? Or is it a post hoc neatness, to be understood only as a consequence of repetition and fame, as in the case of such once-common names as Gary Cooper or Sophie Tucker? Surely this can't be the case. What *jouissance* simply to pronounce the name of Jacques Derrida, to release the liquid wind chime of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe or Luce Irigaray, to form with one's lips the soft oval of Foucault or Cixous and the delicate glottal stop of Barthes! Moreover, to sound these exotic syllables from the deep well of an intimacy born of long and arduous study of their texts. Thus Lacan is not a sound but a library of *écrits,* a labyrinth in whose endless passages resounds the sonorous echo of the Unconscious itself. It is as if these magical, musical, cabalistic phonations had been conjured by poets to sweeten the discourse, to be the Casaubons and the Sarrasines, the Eugénies and the Mathildes, the Strethers and the Julien Sorels, of the poststructural narrative. Imagine in their place, if you can, names like Kelly, Smith, Cohen, or Potts. Could deconstruction possibly have inflamed our youth, lured drifting and embittered structuralists to the new mysteries of the *abîme,* put certainty forever under erasure, had Jacques Derrida's name been—Fred Hunseker? Imagine! Fred Hunseker, conceiver of *le supplément, la différance, archi-écriture, la grammatologie, solicitation, dissémination, souffleur, signéponge, ousia, parousia, la marge, le cadre, l'hymen,* play, free-play, sliding, shaking, spacing, the period, the shuttle, the track, the trace, the turn, the gap, the mark, the cure, the bind, the double bind, the fold, the gram, the "not here," the "not there," the "not that"! Fred Hunseker—the author of *Glas*! Unthinkable.

My final postulate is one known heretofore only within the code itself, and it is therefore something of an archi-secret whose only detectable sign is the complacent smile on the face of all code users. To put it as simply as possible: *the code is immune to parody.* And for the following reason: its antitoxin is not drawn from the venom of the poisoner, the rule in toxological practice, but from its own blood-

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stream. It thus contains its own opposite, both in the Lacanian sense of "*It thinks its Other up*," and the Freudian sense of " '*I have it*' that is, '*I am not it*.' " This point can only be illustrated by textual analysis, so we will consider the following (anonymous) passage:

To ignore this differential and deferment (in the sense of Jacques Derrida's *différance*) and to compensate for the nonexistent order of the *Logos* by vicarious functions of *clôture* and plenitude is, so the argument goes, to indulge in the illusion of presence as re-presented in language. Hence, representationalism threatens to suppress or obliterate the discontinuity of textual production, naturalizes the sign, homogenizes narrative space and so voids it of contradiction, ranks its codes in a stabilizing hierarchy rather than permitting them to interrogate and contradict one another.

This passage could only be conceived as a parody if some original has taught us how to read it recursively as a pseudo-text rather than as a text in its own right. And in this case we are fortunate in having the code original as our tutor. To state the obvious: this is certainly a clever attempt to parody the code. The giveaway sign that it *is* a parody (if it need be said) is its devastating impression of the stereotypic vertigo of a word-intoxicated novice juggling a firestorm of code terms. Moreover, it also succeeds (assuming it was purposely done) in catching a wry sense of the code's ludic preoccupation with paradox—that is, it enacts the shortcomings of representationalism *through* a representation, giving it, as it were, a voice, a personified life in which representation performs such human acts as threatening to suppress, naturalizing, homogenizing, and so on—in a word, doing successfully what a representation *claims* to be able to do, yet our parodist is, paradoxically, claiming it doesn't do—*while doing it!* All in all, one is moved to invoke the lovely line in Shakespeare that is perhaps the definitive appreciation of this peripeteia: "O cunning enemy, that, to catch a saint, / With saints doth bait thy hook!" But having said this, let us now put the parody flat against the trim sufficiency and *true* playfulness of the original text by Robert Weimann in *Literary Theory Today* (1990):

To ignore this differential and deferment (in the sense of Jacques Derrida's *différance*) and to compensate for the nonexistent order of the *Logos* by vicarious functions of *clôture* and plenitude is, so the argument goes, to indulge in the illusion of presence as re-presented in language, Hence, representationalism threatens to suppress or obliterate the discontinuity of textual production, naturalizes the sign, homogenizes narrative space and so voids it of contradiction, ranks its codes in a stabilizing hierarchy rather than permitting them to interrogate and contradict one another.

Like Pierre Menard's version of *The Quixote* in reverse, this is far more subtle than its weak mimic, though there is certainly a superficial textual resemblance. But the resemblance is offset by an attitude that infuses the original text, allowing it to become, as Hamlet puts it, audience to its own act. How does the code accomplish this? How, except through the finesse with which it puts invisible quotation marks around itself, states the other in the language of the Same, preserves exteriority as non-exteriority (without becoming interiority), and inverts the resultant hierarchized opposition (original versus fake) so that it is impossible to tell, finally, which is the dancer and which the dance. Here in one text is a parody of the code, the code parodying itself, the code parodying some hypothetical attempt to parody it, and the code demonstrating its own resiliency by remaining securely what it is: a veritable Möbius strip, in J. Hillis Miller's famous figure, "which has two sides but only one side." To the extent that the code is code-proof against the assault of other codes (of which parody would normally be the most pernicious), it must be all of these things, as it were, *en abîme* ("I *have* each of these things," the code says, "but I am not any of them: I am always already *elsewhere!*). Against the simplistic exaggeration of the parody, then, we may place the smooth economimesis and consummate equivocation of the original that anticipates any possible parody—indeed, shipwrecks it on the shoals of its own plenitude even before it occurs.

And what is this, finally, but an enactment and confirmation of the code's master ideological tenet: the familiar Nietzschean idea that "all seeing is perspective, and so is all knowing," though perhaps its most stunning formulation was given to us by Paul Valéry: " 'L'homme pense; donc je suis,' dit l'univers." Thus methodology and ideology collapse into

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each other. One may as easily speak of the ideology as the essentialization of the method or the method as the essentialization of the ideology—there is not a jot of difference. For, the authentic parody/original, unlike its "fake," carries not only the thin prosecution of a local deconstruction of *any old enemy* (of representationalism, of capitalism, of the received reading of a canonical text, of some banal argument against deconstruction), something that might be repeated to infinity, but a deconstruction of the instrument of deconstruction itself. Like a message writ on water, like Derrida's plunderer who would plunder the structure of theft itself, it leaves behind no trustworthy artifact, nothing save the Cheshire grin of a self-discrediting text, the atrocious, unanswerable parody of its own insubstantiality. Cunning enemy indeed!

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Photograph, Fall of '41

CONSTANCE EGEMO

This is an old picture of a post-depression dream;
a Cape Cod cottage,
the kind of house you find in the thirties' movies
about charming families who've lost their fortunes.
It represents the life savings of my father
who's fifty-six.

It's early evening.
Shadows fall across the well-mowed lawn
from the arborvitae near the door.
Even in this black-and-white picture
you can tell the light is the red-gold of sunset
that makes grass look so green
it doesn't seem real.

Standing at attention in a hand-me-down dress
I look as guilty as I usually feel,
my head turned down to the side,
my glance out of the corner of my eyes.
My little sister beside me
hugs a spotted cat so tightly
that its eyes start from its head.

You can see by the way her bangs stick out
that she cut them off herself.
Our long caramel-colored hair is tightly braided
and tied across the back of our heads with string;

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hairdos that last for days.
None of those Shirley Temple curls
that take hours of work to keep up.

Leaning forward, her arms spread around us
like the wings of a broody hen,
my mother smiles her Mary Pickford smile,
strangely at odds with the Mae West body
straining her housedress seams.
Her gray-brown hair is done up in a knot.
She looks very old for forty-six.

We're caught forever in a year
that's holding its breath for peace,
that wants so earnestly to believe
Hitler is only a demented wizard,
a celluloid trickster escaped
from the hectic newsreels we ignore
before the main feature plays.

In just four months our neighbor's sons
will be whirled away like Dorothy to Oz.
Like her, they'll learn to kill in order to survive.
They'll march in step down the yellow roads
and some will fall into fields of poppies
where they'll dream forever about Kansas,
never come home.

✪ CONSTANCE EGEMO's poems have appeared in the *National Forum*, *Poetry*, and *Yankee Magazine*.

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The Tyranny of the Aesthetic

JOHN P. SISK

Western culture at the present time is conspicuously and painfully short of a number of good things, including a capacity to put up with shortages, but no one is complaining about a shortage of art. "The most common assumption," Jacques Barzun observes in *The Culture We Deserve*, "is that there cannot be too much art, and hence that the public has an obligation to support whatever qualifies under the name." An awful lot of art does now exist, given the strong possibility that most of the artists who ever lived are living now.

Indeed, one may wonder whether the moral imperative of the aesthetic was ever such a determining factor in human affairs. Certainly Arthur C. Danto, in his "Memo to Bill" in the February 1, 1993, issue of the *Nation* did his best to put this imperative to work not long after President Clinton came into office. He hoped that the huge popular success of the then-recent Matisse retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art might inspire President Clinton to make a declaration of aesthetic allegiance and so become "the Arts President." Such a president would not miss the "mysterious communion" that works of art could engender in the public, even when the works were not understood—and of course he would not miss their capacity to foster a badly needed national unity.

I suspect that Regis Debray, whose "Universal Art: The Desperate Religion," which appeared in the Spring 1992 *New Perspective Quarterly*, would have read Professor Danto's "Memo" just as skeptically as Jacques Barzun would have. A former adviser to President Mitterand and one-time comrade of Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, Regis Debray would have had too much experience with desperate substitutes for religion to believe that art could do what other grand unifying schemes had failed to do. He notes in his essay that "a new museum opens every day in Europe, which is being covered with a flamboyant mantle of museums analogous to the Middle Ages' 'white mantle of churches.' " In the past ten years Germany has built three hundred museums, France now has over one thousand, while "in the United States ritual attendance at these sanctuaries has grown from 200 million in 1965 to 500 million today."

An aesthetic optimist might say that, if the way of art is the way of salvation, then the Western democracies are on the right road. Debray, of course, is not that optimistic. Barzun reminds us that Balzac was dismayed to learn that there were two thousand painters in Paris and that fifty years later Degas, no less dismayed, said, "We must discourage the arts." Debray is not anti-art, but he would have understood this refusal to identify aesthetic quantity with any kind of personal or community salvation. Visitors, he says, "are no closer to brotherhood when they walk out of the pyramid of the Louvre than when they walked in."

We may assume (even hope) that President Clinton will be too preoccupied with the deficit and the uncooperative Republicans to become the Arts President. But, in the meantime, will it be safe to keep on thinking, as Danto does, that the hordes of out-of-towners standing in lines for admission tickets to museums are really "citizens of the Republic of Arts, come to pay tribute to what defines them as a commonwealth"? Here the assumption seems to be that there is a natural affinity between the aesthetic and the political, so that the last thing a democratic polity has to worry about is a glut of art.

As Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn has put it in an address to the National Arts Club (reprinted in the *New York Times Book Review*, February 2,

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1993), "Every work of a skilled musician, artist or writer is shaped by an absolutely unique combination of personality traits, creative ambition and individual, as well as national, experience." What worries him is "a raucous, impatient 'avant-gardism' at any cost," a relentless cult of novelty in all the arts that for some time now has expressed "a deep-seated hostility toward any spirituality." Having learned in his own country the anti-humanist extremes to which creative freedom can be taken, Solzhenitsyn is no more likely than Debray to see communal salvation in the contemporary glut of art. The idea of an Arts President would probably affect Solzhenitsyn as it would Degas.

Given the extent to which, even in precapitalist times, money has been seen as a prime corrupter of the artist and art, it is interesting to see what Debray has to say about the 1991 World Art Summit held in Venice under the auspices of the World Economic Forum. Here the elite of the international business community hoped that by fostering art it could create "a worldwide spirit of unity through the inevitable diversity of cultures." So artists, who in an earlier time had enthroned art as a religion against the money-worshiping bourgeois, were getting that enthronement back "thanks to the world banking establishment"—which, presumably, would share none of Solzhenitsyn's apprehensions about the community-fragmenting consequences of a commercially financed avant-gardism.

Such an optimism about the banking establishment sends one back to pre–Civil War America and the world of those imperial artist-selves, Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman. As Quentin Anderson views them in "A Culture of One's Own" (THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, Autumn 1992), these poets would have been a disrupting presence in any World Art Summit, even if it had met in a place as well adapted to the formulation of world-shaking summit statements as Thoreau's homemade cabin. Not that any of the three had discouraging things to say about the arts. As Anderson points out, "They enjoyed a mode of possessing the world that only 'poets' or 'makers' could share." Such sharing was only possible outside the prison of organized religion—although, as Anderson reminds us, the ex-clergyman Emerson saw to it that his daughters went regularly to church. For him, everybody was to become a maker of his world, and this making could only be the expression of true inner selves who could not help aspiring to a social condition of salvational aesthetic abundance.

The chief obstacle to this utopian condition (pace the World Art Summit) was the spirit of money. For Emerson it was the soul of State Street, and for Thoreau the headquarters of that dehumanizing economy against which his *Walden* was a compelling preachment. In time, as Anderson reminds his readers, this "all-inclusive opposition to the money-saturated scene" would animate those fellow travelers of the left who were bedazzled by the poetic image of a society unified by the mysterious communion of socialist realism. Such a lockstep aesthetic was not exactly what Emerson had in mind. The American Dream strained through a Marxist filter would have struck his imperial selfhood as little more than an attempt to universalize the spirit of Brook Farm. Emerson, in taking his stand against the money worshipers, was not crippled by postmodern doubts about the reality of the creative, true inner self. For him, the divine spark of the self—that close affiliate of the Over-Soul—is really there, its voice muffled by the bourgeois clamor of the world. This bourgeois clamor would continue to encourage all creators of inner selves to see democracy, that liberator from ancient tyrannies, as itself a prison designed to frustrate their efforts at self-creation.

As Debray presents him, André Malraux, once a minister of culture for Charles de Gaulle, was himself something of a self-creator for whom art was "the principle of a secular but universal salvation." In the Spring 1992 issue of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, Renee Winegarten refers to Malraux's "proclaimed trust in the supreme value of creativity and art." Her essay is especially useful in helping us see the tyranny of the aesthetic. "In spirit," she points out, "Malraux is a ruthless Jacobin" whose ideal artist-politician is the French Revolution's Saint-Just, that self-created " 'archangel of the Terror' of 1793–94." Saint-Just eliminated what was extraneous to the totalistic aim of the Revolution just as ruthlessly as the poet eliminates those elements that, however precious in themselves, are a threat to the integrity of his vision. Winegarten, in fact, shows the same austere aesthetic at work in Malraux's doctoring of his autobiography in the interest of validating himself as a trustworthy visionary of a possible future for all.

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This aesthetic is no less conspicuously at work in Stalin, whose creative ruthlessness in behalf of the good cause, says Winegarten, Malraux had a hard time ceasing to admire. The same violent aesthetic captivated those Mao-bemused ultra-left Frenchmen of 1968, among whom was that imperial innovator Michel Foucault, who for a time supported the Iranian revolution and the rights of the Baader-Meinhof terrorists to legal representation in France. Certainly Malraux had compelling reasons for not wanting to let Stalin go. Stalin (like Mao) wrote poetry in his early youth; but, as Stanislaw Baranczak has pointed out, he "could have claimed to be *more* creative than a poet," having brought into existence "a totally invented reality to erase the very distinction between the world-as-it-is and the world-as-it-should-be." One might say that, in the process, and with a draconic display of affection, Stalin forced his people into a limit situation designed to give them permanent possession of such a world—making their habitation a museum in which all mankind could worship as they experienced their mysterious communion.

Of course, Stalin was only cashing in on the avant-gardist creativity of Lenin, who had earlier arrived at the Finland Station in his sealed train just as memorably as Picasso had arrived still earlier in Paris to help inaugurate the cubist revolution. The three of them can return us to Jacob Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* and to a time when such ruthless aestheticians as the Borgias had learned to see "the state as the outcome of reflection and calculation, the state as a work of art." In their primitive and single-minded way, the Borgias were trailblazers for Hitler as well as for Mussolini, whose creative fascism Ezra Pound admired.

Even as a temperamental teenager, Hitler aspired to be a great artist. In his own time and place, each of these twentieth-century political innovators was an Arts President determined to mandate the environment in which a mysterious communion could happen. All three—Stalin, Lenin, and Hitler—with their self-absorption and inability to tolerate criticism, behaved like artistic personalities. In the meantime, and much to the discomfiture of traditionalists such as Solzhenitsyn, avant-garde aesthetic innovators continue to arrive, with or without political agendas, in their sealed but quickly opened trains to add to the glut of art.

Our culture refuses to give up on the image of the artist as an imperial and performing self for whom both the personal and aesthetic are political, and whose creations, however subversive they may appear by democratic bourgeois standards, will in the long run prove therapeutic. So Anne Bernays, writing in the January 20, 1993, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, reminds us that "lasting art is neither polite nor charming: it achieves its effects by taking reality to the limits, by agitating the calm." For Bernays, the photographs of Sally Mann, with their depiction of childhood sexuality, expose the myth of childhood innocence for what it is. Here, presumably, the artist, caught between the imperative of the aesthetic and the tyranny of bourgeois morality, must be permitted the necessary hyperbole in the interest of propagandizing the liberating truth (which may suggest that the National Endowment for the Arts in its most authentic functions is bound to be political). One can only hope that in this fierce dialectic the visions of childhood innocence and normal sexual relations will not be irreparably invalidated—or, which may amount to the same thing, that the art-worshiping public is not left with the impression that it must choose between Sally Mann and old-fashioned Hallmark greeting cards.

Given the pluralism of the culture, I see no reason to believe that democratic politics will cease to be affected by the conflict of morality and aesthetics. For two centuries now many intellectuals, especially literary intellectuals, have found democracy to be aesthetically disgusting and, for that reason, morally objectionable. Even Eastern Europeans, so recently released from their totalitarian prisons but now faced with the disorderly and mercenary alternative of American democracy, often appear to yearn for the mysterious community of the kind of benevolent but irresistible tyranny in which intellectuals have often done pretty well for themselves. Eastern Europeans and their likes in the West might seem to imply the desirability of a World Arts Council bound by a declaration of aesthetic allegiance and composed not of international businessmen but of such people as Ezra Pound, Georg Lukacs, André Malraux, and Martin Heidegger—and with someone such as Saint-Just to keep the whole enterprise oriented to its grand objective.

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To the extent that such a World Arts Council was effective, there would be the problem of living with the political, social, and moral consequences as all those truly original and creative selves cooperated in the relentless cult of novelty that Solzhenitsyn and Degas found so menacing. We would have to learn how to live in a constantly accelerating world, especially if there were a further blurring of the boundaries that separate the aesthetic from the political, moral, and religious realms. Then the possibility exists that such a council, concerned as it would be with the communal therapy of art, would cease to be ruled by the distinctions traditionally ordered to the welfare of art itself. In such a new dispensation, a Warhol retrospective might command as much respectful attention as a Matisse, and a stroll through the Pompidou Centre might be the spiritual equivalent of high mass at the Notre Dame Cathedral a few blocks away.

Most likely, a World Arts Council would in effect underwrite the all-too-familiar disgust with democracy, which, when measured against an even moderately successful poem or painting, is aesthetically, and therefore morally and politically, offensive. This may suggest that, if a democracy is to succeed, it does not need more art and more museums but a way of protecting itself from the aesthetic impulse that it cannot help fostering. The aesthetic impulse is just as voracious as Kant might lead one to believe: it never rests, and it wants it all.

In a democracy, art encourages the perfectionism that sometimes drives hagiographers of artists to gloss over, if not completely overlook, the human failings of their subjects. All too often, artists in their biographies become the aesthetically integrated selves that their creations appear to insist on. In a totalitarian system, as Baranczak points out, such a glossing over is an invalidation of memory. Creative artists at their best (he gives us the examples of Czeslaw Milosz and Zbigniew Herbert) oppose such lapses of memory, but all too often they appear to endorse and support them. This means that the continuing biography of any democracy is as threatened by the ultimately demoralizing aesthetic of disremembering hagiography as the appreciation of Ezra Pound's poetry is by a reader's reluctance to face up to the poet's confusion of poetry with politics.

The unimaginable Arts President that democracy needs is one who has experienced, perhaps in his own flesh, the utopian byways down which art can tempt one as it both models a particular perfection and asserts its pertinence to human affairs generally. Even when imbued with postmodern disillusionment, art implies that if the imperial avant-gardists keep resolutely and courageously to their tasks, heroically undergoing hardships for the sake of art, if their patrons and the public stand loyally against the onslaughts of the bourgeois, then in the fullness of time only good will result, if the good is only a liberating release from all illusions so that "limit experiences" can be freely indulged in.

In the interest of his own survival, an Arts President should know that you can say of the aesthetic imperative what you can say of advertising: that its tendency is to promise more than it can deliver. It would be helpful if he shared some of the skepticism that the late Northrop Frye expressed in *Spiritus Mundi*: the arts are a secondary luxury that "can add pleasure and even some serenity to life, but they have no power to transform it, and the notion that they have is for the birds." An Arts President should know, too, that the aestheticization of politics (with its correlative emphasis on the tyranny of democracy) may be a misguided effort to forestall the disillusionment that follows when museums are confused with cathedrals. Perhaps the otherwise liberated Emerson was displaying some residual wariness about this confusion of realms when he sent his daughters to church.

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My Interview with Bertrand Russell

WALTER L. ARNSTEIN

The single most memorable episode of the 1956–57 academic year, my year as a Fulbright Scholar affiliated with the University of London, was my interview with the redoubtable Bertrand Russell—mathematician, philosopher, historian, educator, popularizer of science, political activist, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, and perhaps the sole individual to remain a household name in Britain for nine successive decades.

My purpose in London in 1956–57 was to collect research materials on a subject that no twentieth-century historian or doctoral student had yet written about, the Bradlaugh case. That case revolved around whether Charles Bradlaugh, notorious English atheist, republican, and advocate of birth control, should be allowed to take and to keep the parliamentary seat for which the electors of the borough of Northampton had chosen him in 1880. This subject sorely troubled Gladstone's second ministry, affected party politics, and appeared to throw a great deal of revealing light on late-Victorian religious organizations as well as on late-Victorian assumptions about how best to balance the dictates of justice with those of respectability.

Although my researches were concentrated on the manuscript collections of such major political figures as William Ewart Gladstone and on a variety of periodicals, I was also aware that it might just barely be possible for me to meet people who had actually known Bradlaugh, who had died in 1891, sixty-six years earlier. I did meet two of them: one of them was the elderly grandson of the man who had been Bradlaugh's election agent back in 1880; he recalled the great radical tipping his top hat to the family maid, an idiosyncratic nod to the concept of social equality. The other person was an even more elderly woman who remembered Bradlaugh's powerful voice booming across Northampton's town square during that pre-microphone era.

In February 1957 I decided to approach one other individual who knew the era if not necessarily the individual, and so I wrote to Bertrand Russell at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he retained a fellowship for life. The surprisingly prompt reply came not from Cambridge but from his home in North Wales. It read:

> I have not in my possession any unpublished material about the Bradlaugh case. I should have had if my father had lived longer, as he was a friend of George and Jacob Holyoake and of that whole set, but he died in 1876. I had no connection with any of the people concerned in the Bradlaugh case except [William Ewart] Gladstone and [John] Morley, neither of whom ever mentioned it in my hearing. This being so, I hardly think that you will consider it worth while to travel to this rather inaccessible corner of North Wales, but, if it happened to suit your plans, I should be glad to see you. Yours sincerely, Bertrand Russell

Who should happen to be traveling through that rather inaccessible corner of North Wales in March 1957 if not I? I was to make my first visit to Ireland that month in order to consult manuscripts in Dublin of members of the Irish Parliamentary Party, and I intended to take the train from London to Holyhead in northwest Wales, there to catch the overnight boat

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to Dublin. A few days later I would embark on the overnight boat back to Holyhead. This time I would take not the London express, but a local train that took me close to the Welsh town of Penrhyndeudraeth, near which Russell lived. My plans were confirmed on March 18, when I received a second letter from Bertrand Russell. (Back in 1931 he had become the third Earl Russell on the occasion of the death of his elder brother, but he used his noble title only on special occasions.) Russell wrote:

I shall be glad to see you during the afternoon of March 25. If you come from Portmadoc, you take the road to Penrhyndeudraeth and, shortly after crossing the estuary by the causeway, you will come to a place where the word "school" is painted on the road and opposite that a lane turning off on the right. My house is about half-a-mile up this lane. Perhaps you would let me know at what sort of time to expect you. Yours sincerely, Bertrand Russell

I can no longer recall the precise method by which I reached the house, but I do remember that it involved a good deal of walking. I was amazed by Penrhyndeudraeth itself, on the surface a typical English town in which all the signs were, however, in Welsh and all the people seemed to be speaking Welsh, a language no more similar to English than is Russian. I was let in the door by a woman in her forties, who must have been the Countess Russell, Bertrand Russell's fourth wife, the former Edith Finch, a longtime instructor in English at Bryn Mawr College in the United States. He had married her in 1952 after using his Nobel Prize award to arrange a divorce from his third wife, Patricia ("Peter") Spence, the mother of Conrad Russell—the well-known historian of early modern Britain who now holds the title of fifth Earl Russell.

At the end of the hallway I noted a kitchen, and I was led into a study that adjoined it. Bookcases lined two of the walls; in them I immediately spotted the complete works of Jeremy Bentham prominently displayed, and I recalled that back in 1872 Bentham's protégé, John Stuart Mill, had agreed to serve as Bertrand Russell's godfather. Russell's large mahogany desk had been placed along a third wall of the study, while an open fire blazed merrily in the fireplace set in the fourth wall. A window looked out on mountains, on meadows in which sheep were grazing, and also on Portmadoc Bay and the Irish Sea beyond.

I barely had time to look out the window before Bertrand Russell entered. He seemed somewhat smaller than I had expected. His head, covered by a large shock of wavy white hair with a tinge of gray, seemed surprisingly big. Russell had long been a cartoonist's dream. He shook my hand and asked whether I had been looking at any of his books. I said that I had and that I had also admired the view from the window. "Yes," he said, "John Maddox built that causeway. He is the man after whom Portmadoc is named. He was a great friend of Shelley, who lived here. Oh, not in this house, but in the neighborhood."

Russell asked me to sit down in one of the two easy chairs in front of the fire. They were perpendicular to the fireplace and faced one another. Russell then offered me a cigarette. I commented that I was one of those unusual persons who did not smoke. "Yes, that is unusual," Russell agreed—and in 1957 it was. Did I mind his smoking? "Hardly," I responded, and he immediately lit one of the pipes that seemed to be part of his persona in virtually every photograph that I had seen of him.

"So you've come to see me about Bradlaugh," he began. "My father was in that set, you know. He received quite a few letters from George Jacob Holyoake." Holyoake, another well-known mid-Victorian atheist, was convicted back in 1842 of blasphemy and spent several months in jail. "But of course," Russell went on—in reference to his father—"he died in 1876." Russell's mother had died even earlier in 1874. One of Queen Victoria's most frequently quoted expostulations was made against "this mad, wicked folly of 'Women's Rights,' with all its attendant horrors. . . . It is a subject which makes the Queen so furious that she cannot contain herself. God created men and women different—then let them remain each in their own position." The woman whose activities had inspired that outburst was Lady Amberley, who was Bertrand Russell's mother. In Queen Victoria's judgment, "Lady Amberley ought to get a good whipping!" She never did receive that whipping, but in 1874 she caught diptheria. Within a few days she was dead; Bertrand Russell's only sister died of the same disease a week later. "It seems odd to say that one's parents died in 1876, doesn't it?" Russell asked me.

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"I never knew Bradlaugh personally," he went on. "I remember Labouchere, though." Henry Labouchere had been chosen a Liberal member of Parliament by the voters of Northampton in 1880 along with Bradlaugh. Russell recalled Labouchere telling him of the occasion on which he was called into the lobby of the House of Commons by a constitutent who really wanted to see Bradlaugh. "I'm sorry," Labouchere remarked, "but I am the Christian member for Northampton." In fact, Russell went on, Labouchere's religious views differed little from those of Bradlaugh. My reading had led me to the same conclusion: that the two men were not far apart. "Not a bit," Russell nodded. He then recalled Labouchere's best-remembered witticism, about Gladstone always having an ace up his sleeve, but acting, when someone caught him at it, as if the Lord had put it there. "Very true," Russell nodded.

Turning for the moment to my American nationality, Russell recalled that his parents had first visited the United States in 1867 and that he had, of course, lived there on numerous occasions. On his first visit, in 1896, he was pleased to note that many people still remembered his parents. I in turn recalled listening to him in the United States a few years earlier on the television program "Meet the Press." On that occasion Russell had emphatically declared that he believed in socialism. During the early Eisenhower years, no American of comparable stature would have made such an admission, no matter what his underlying belief. "Yes," Russell agreed, "Americans have to import foreigners to tell them what they want to hear."

He recalled that, during the same visit, while addressing an audience at Columbia University, he had declared bluntly that he did not see very much to choose from between Communism and Catholicism, since both were opposed to liberty. According to Russell, this declaration was followed by "a moment of stunned silence and then by a tremendous, thunderous burst of applause." "I still believe that," he added. Although I did not wish to differ point-blank with the great philosopher, I gently suggested that perhaps Catholic beliefs had become more moderate, that they had mellowed somewhat with the passing years as opposed to Communism, Catholicism's relatively youthful counterpart. "I do not think so," he replied, but he did concede that as of 1957 Catholics dominated fewer European governments than did Communists.

I remarked that the essay in his recently published book *Portraits from Memory* that had most impressed me was that on his grandfather Lord John Russell. The essay begins with a sentence I had found immensely moving: "My grandfather, whom I remember vividly, was born on the eighteenth of August, 1792." My doctoral prelims were only a year in the past, and I knew very well who Lord John Russell was—twice prime minister of Great Britain and yet earlier in his career the man who had introduced the Reform Bill of 1832 into the House of Commons. Bertrand Russell, then in the care of his grandparents, could himself remember a large group of earnest men gathering on the lawn in front of their house one day in May of 1878.

> They cheered, and I naturally inquired what they were cheering about. I was told that they were leading Nonconformists congratulating [my grandfather] on the fiftieth anniversary of his first great achievement, the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, which [had] excluded Nonconformists from office and Parliament. The love of civil and religious liberty was firmly implanted in me by such incidents. . . . This feeling has survived through the various totalitarian regimes that have seduced many of my friends of the Right and of the Left equally.

Even earlier in his career, Lord John Russell had been tutored by Dr. Edmund Cartwright, the man who in 1785 had perfected the steam-driven power loom, one of the key inventions of the Industrial Revolution. Lord John Russell, a younger son of the sixth Duke of Bedford, had also visited the Duke of Wellington fighting in Spain during the Napoleonic Wars, and in 1814 he conducted a personal interview on the island of Elba with the Emperor Napoleon. Lord John observed at the time that, in contrast to the impression he had formed from portraits, Napoleon seemed very short and very fat, and that he had a turned-up nose, and a mouth that expressed both contempt and decisiveness.

In the mid-1950s, the Western Civilization sequence at Northwestern University—which I had taught as a graduate teaching assistant—involved three academic quarters: pre-history to 1500; 1500 to 1815; and 1815 to the present. I told Bertrand Russell that henceforth I

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intended to introduce that final quarter with a reminder that the era since 1815 was surprisingly brief, considering it involved only two overlapping Russell lifetimes, with part of at least one lifetime left over. "History stopped in 1815 in our day," Bertrand Russell observed. "Everything that came thereafter was mere gossip."

Whereas his grandfather had been a member of the House of Commons for forty-nine years and a member of the House of Lords for another seventeen, Bertrand Russell's father had served as member of Parliament for only a single year. Then he lost his seat for advocating birth control, in the 1860s a most unpopular policy. According to Bertrand Russell, "Father spent most of that year attempting to persuade Parliament that [Thomas Henry] Huxley's lectures were not entertaining, and that Huxley should therefore be permitted to lecture on Sundays." Entertainment on Sunday was then forbidden by all manner of blue laws. "Was he successful?" I asked. "No," Russell replied, "too many people had already listened to Huxley and had found him vastly entertaining." He went on to note that a comparable Canadian law forbidding Sunday newspapers was still in force. "Of course," he went on, "it's valid for the newspapermen to work all day Sunday to bring out the Monday papers."

Our conversation then turned to Russell's own writings, among which he especially recommended to me *Freedom and Organization, 1815–1914*. "A better title for the book," he observed, "would be 'A Hundred Years of Liberalism.'" I promised to look into it, and I mentioned how much I had enjoyed his *Unpopular Essays*, which, he acknowledged, had proved to be quite popular. I also noted that I had read his recent article in the Sunday *Times* of London on the subject of life after death—in which Russell did not believe. "I cannot understand the wishes for a future life," he had written privately many years earlier. "It is the chief consolation that in the grave there is rest." I noted that, among the contributors to the life-after-death symposium, he appeared to have been outnumbered. "Yes," he smiled, "like Judas I was in the minority." He went on to call to my attention one of his essays in a book entitled *Nightmares of Eminent Persons*, in which a tribe of Red Indians practiced such barbaric customs as eating any children that were born to a family after the first three. They then defended their system, he said, by "exactly" the same arguments that had often been used to justify Christianity.

I observed that in perusing Bradlaugh's weekly journal, the *National Reformer* of the 1880s, I had during the previous year looked at more anti-theological writings than ever before in my life and that Bradlaugh's hopes had not, after all, been attained. "As far as there being many people who actually call themselves atheists, no," Russell agreed, "but the whole theological climate is totally different. If somebody says that he is an atheist, the ordinary man in the street doesn't much care. America is a much more Christian country." For example, he went on, "It would be very difficult, if not impossible, to obtain a university job in the United States if you declared you were an atheist, whereas it would be no barrier in England." I noted that I was at that very time in the position of trying to find a university job. (I did not know it then, but the all-important offer from Roosevelt University was to arrive in my London mailbox precisely two weeks later. I accepted by return mail.)

"In a young man like yourself," Russell noted, "it would be sheer bravado [to proclaim yourself an atheist]. But once you become established and respectable, then it is different." By the time that I did become established and reasonably respectable, I possessed not the slightest inclination in my lectures on history to allude to my personal religious views. At the same time I came to pay a good deal of attention to the influence of religious faith and controversy on human history, an aspect of the subject that during the 1960s and 1970s too many historians appeared to neglect. Had Russell lived long enough to learn that my second monograph would be named the "best book of the year" by the American Catholic Historical Associaion, he might have shaken his head in disbelief.

Russell went on that afternoon to speak of Annie Besant, Bradlaugh's longtime associate, who in her post-atheist days became a convert to theosophy and supervised a theosophist school. The headmaster of the school was found guilty of all manner of homosexual offenses involving his students, but Mrs. Besant refused to dismiss him. "It doesn't matter," she said. "He is a theosophist." "That is the effect of religion on people," Bertrand Russell concluded.

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In my own recent research, I had come to the conclusion that the Roman Catholic Church and Irish Nationalist M.P.'s had been rather more influential in the fight against Charles Bradlaugh than earlier accounts of the case had suggested. That was news to him, remarked Russell. He did observe how very much the Irish Nationalists of the 1880s had been hated and feared by most Englishmen as terrorists. The circle of acquaintances in which he had grown up had generally upheld Bradlaugh's right to his parliamentary seat while deploring his other opinions.

"You actually knew Gladstone, didn't you?" I inquired. "Oh, yes," Russell responded, "yes, quite well. He was a formidable man. People who did not know Gladstone cannot understand his influence. Primarily it was his eyes"—eyes that could either charm or wither with a glance. In one of his autobiographical essays, Russell recalls that, at age seventeen, as "the man of the house" he had had to entertain Gladstone after dinner and that it proved to be the most terrifying experience in his life. The ladies had gone off to the drawing room, and he was expected to play the host. The adolescent Russell was petrified. The grand old man was silent. "At last in his booming bass voice, he condescended to make his one and only remark: 'This is very good port they've given me, but why have they given it me in a claret glass?'" In that same essay, Russell tells the story of Gladstone addressing a Liberal meeting at which he was repeatedly interrupted by a Tory drunk. "At last Mr. Gladstone fixed the man with his eye, and spoke these words: 'May I request the gentleman who has, not once but repeatedly, interrupted my observations by his interjections, to extend to me that large measure of courtesy which, were I in his place and he in mine, I should most unhesitatingly extend to him.' The man was sobered by the shock, and he remained silent for the rest of the evening."

Gladstone, Russell concluded, "was either loved or hated. There was no in-between position." I noted that the United States had not long before had a president to whom people had reacted in a very similar manner. He agreed; indeed, he observed that when he had lived in the United States during the 1930s, he had drawn precisely that analogy between Franklin Delano Roosevelt and William Ewart Gladstone. Russell had been a great admirer of FDR during his New Deal days, but in his judgment Roosevelt had committed some major errors at Yalta in 1945. More of Eastern Europe had been given over to the Russians than was necessary at a time when American armies constituted a powerful force on the Continent. Then the American armies withdrew, and there was no way to enforce the agreements. At the very least, Russell thought, the allies could have gained legal access to Berlin. He had visited Berlin at the time of the 1948 airlift, and he recalled the feeling of claustrophobia he had felt there.

I noted that I had been of two minds about the Yalta Conference, if only because criticism of Yalta had been such an insistent Republican campaign cry for so many years. In this instance, Russell thought, the Republicans had a point, "not that I ever want to give the Republicans credit for anything," he added with a smile. I countered that I did not wish to go that far myself. Not long ago, after all, I had voted for Jacob Javits, the Republican congressman who then represented the uptown Manhattan district in which I had grown up. Russell agreed that Javits was an unusual Republican, and he added: "You're exonerated!"

I asked Russell whether, by chance, he was familiar with any of my ancestors, such as my great-great-uncle by marriage, Eduard Bernstein, the nineteenth-century German socialist pioneer. When Bismarck's anti-socialist laws were in full force, Bernstein had exiled himself to England for ten years, and it was there that he developed the theory of "revisionism" as a critique of orthodox Marxism. (My personal connection with Bernstein was indirect but vital: he had first introduced my maternal grandfather to my maternal grandmother.) Russell immediately identified Bernstein as "the great revisionist," and he went on to note that, professing socialist as he was, he agreed with revisionism. He concurred with me also that most west European socialist parties had adopted revisionism in practice if not in name. Back in 1896, Russell recalled, when he was a Liberal rather than a Socialist, he had personally debated Bernstein at a Fabian Society meeting.

More recently Russell had visited Northwestern University, my doctoral institution, and he spoke with amusement about Paul A. Schilpp, the professor of philosophy there, who edited books constituting a "Library of Living Phi-

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losophy." No sooner had Schilpp decided to gather significant excerpts from the works of a particular philosopher for one of his volumes than that philosopher would die and become ineligible for inclusion. Russell found such a publishing problem highly amusing. Russell himself was to outlive his contribution to the series by twenty-five years.

We returned to the subject of birth control. The early nineteenth-century political radical Francis Place had been among the first Englishmen to advocate birth control. Russell recalled a letter by Jeremy Bentham to Place about an individual who opposed the prescription. "You see, he's juggical," wrote Bentham, using the private synonym for "Christian" that people in Bentham's circle customarily used when talking in front of the servants. It would be of great importance, I suggested, to learn how the large-scale birth-control programs currently being instituted in Asia would work out in the long run. Russell felt certain that a "most profound change" would result. The next area in which the problem of overpopulation would become acute, he predicted, would be among blacks—not so much those who lived in the United States as those who lived in Africa and in the West Indies. A solution to the problem of world population growth, he thought, was central to human progress.

"But then they'll all be wiped out first by the H-bomb anyway," Russell suddenly burst out. Was he truly that pessimistic on the subject? I asked. "It is a matter of touch and go" was Russell's reply. I commented on the desirability of the bomb-producing countries at least voluntarily agreeing to suspend the testing of nuclear bombs, even though Adlai Stevenson, the Democratic candidate for president the year before, had failed to convince his fellow citizens to favor such a goal. Russell agreed, but he went on to note that it was because of nuclear weapons that he felt no particular gratitude for American military assistance to Britain. "The only result of American help" in the form of American airbases on British soil is that, by making a more accessible target than the United States, "we shall be hit first by a Russian H-bomb. So I see no reason to be grateful." Although I was struck by Russell's words, I was not persuaded by them, and I would not have predicted at the time that, beginning a year later, the ban-the-bomb movement would become Russell's all-consuming final political cause.

Nationalism, I observed, seemed to be the one nineteenth-century "ism" destined to outlive all others. "Much the toughest philosophy," Russell agreed. "The last human being on earth will shout 'Hurrah for my country' before he dies." "Think of the British in Ireland," he went on. They had been there for eight centuries doing everything in their power to conquer the Irish, but "the Irish remained just as nationalistic as ever." Ireland's greatest years, he added, were the seventh and eighth centuries. Nowadays the chief concern of the Irish, I ventured, would seem to be that their island remained partitioned. "Yes," he agreed, "every country that has been oppressed argues, 'We want somebody to oppress, too.' There is no more justification why Ireland should rule Ulster against its will than why England should rule Ireland, not a particle more." The Irish Republic, he went on, was one of the most obscurantist of European governments. British newspapers that made any reference to birth control were stopped at the Irish border. At the same time the favorite occupation of some priests was to break up courting couples.

I noted the paradox of Ireland as a Catholic country in which the population continued slowly to decline. Russell attributed this state of affairs to the large number of older people in the population—because of continuing large-scale emigration—and to the custom of late marriage. He asked me where I had been in Ireland, and he went on to recommend the Wicklow Hills as a peculiarly beautiful spot.

While all this conversation was going on, we had been served coffee by the Countess Russell. In the meantime, Russell filled and then refilled my cup. Once or twice he also nimbly added another log to the fire. I then asked him whether, before I departed, I might be allowed to take a picture of him. He readily assented, and after I first turned on a few lights, I took the picture.

He asked me how I expected to travel back to London, and then he showed me the book jacket of a new collection of his essays to be entitled *Why I Am Not a Christian.* The book was being edited by Paul Edwards, an American professor of philosophy at New York University. He thought Edwards was very courageous for undertaking the task at a time that Dwight Eisenhower had just added "God" to

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the pledge of allegiance in the same fashion that Franklin Roosevelt had included the right to worship God among his wartime "Four Freedoms" while neglecting the right not to worship at all. Pointing to the book jacket again, he smiled: "That is so people don't think I am getting too respectable."

Russell led me to the door and told me that he had been glad to see me, although he'd been unable to help me much with Bradlaugh. We shook hands and said good-bye. I had spent a little more than an hour with Russell, and I never saw him in person again. I must have spent the greater part of another hour sitting on a park bench in Penrhyndeudraeth trying to reconstruct verbatim as much of our conversation as I could. After my return to London, I typed up eleven pages of such notes and stuck them into a cardboard folder. There they patiently waited until I dug them out late last year.

In 1957, I was in the process, at least half-consciously, of embarking on a lifetime devoted to learning a great deal more about the Victorians and to teaching and writing about what I learned. And during that formative year, I was given this brief opportunity to become acquainted with and to talk to a man who had not only met many of the great Victorians, but who, in a number of distinct ways, was and remained a Victorian himself. Even thirty-six years ago, the Victorian era already seemed to me very distant in time, but for one brief afternoon, conversing with Bertrand Russell, I was there.

Marsh Hawk

ANNE-MARIE CUSAC

The wind bears it, as if willing its will
into a perfectly unmoving motion
with a shiver at the thin wing edge
until it veers and drops, slantwise
toward the wet sedge.

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Himself

GEORGE V. HIGGINS

THE RASCAL KING: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JAMES MICHAEL CURLEY (1874–1958). *By Jack Beatty. Addison-Wesley. $25.*

On the northerly side of Dock Square, across the street from Faneuil Hall and nor-nor'west of Quincy Market, between Union Street to the east and New Congress Street to the west, there is one of Boston's pleasant little watch-fob park-promenades. From the city planner's point of view, the overriding general function of such geographical baguettes of low shrubs and neat brick walks appears to be the suffocation at inception of any possible entrepreneurial notions of wheedling, pilfering, or obtaining by other means public title to small vacant strips of land, in order to emplace upon them compact buildings and then batten off commercial traffic in the neighborhoods. The location of this one made that defensive intention particularly urgent, inasmuch as Quincy Marketplace is to Boston as Disney World is to Orlando, drawing relatively free-spending tourists the way chardonnay draws Brie and Bremer wafers; if left up for grabs for very long, that little plot would have been snatched for sure, snapped up by some opportunistic privateer in the mere blinking of an eye.

That sort of civic protectiveness of the commonweal is of course utterly lost upon most of us native Bostonians, even those on foot. We are, you see, quite as oblivious to the unique attractions of our town as the rucks of New Yorkers, Chicagoans, San Franciscans, and other Top Twenty Cities locals usually are to those of theirs (the New Orleans denizens I've encountered, though, don't seem to suffer from such hometown blindness). To us proceeding at a businesslike 100–105 drumbeat cadence silent in our heads, such bangle parks are nothing more than discrete short distances to be expeditiously traversed as stages of longer routes to useful destinations.

All of this means that the two imposing bronze statues at the southerly end of the promenade at Dock Square go pretty much ignored most of the time. Occasionally, some visitor sits him- or herself down on the park bench next to the seated effigy with the ursine head in the relaxed attitude and, for the diversion of a camera-equipped friend or family, pretends to engage the late James Michael Curley (1874–1958) deep in conversation. The bolder types sometimes essay as well on departing to drape an arm of jocund, bogus good-fellowship across the massive shoulder of the orating Curley, standing with frock coat thrown open to display waistcoat and watch-chain to best advantage, a few feet from the Curley statue on the bench.

Most of these wags find it would take a large, economy-size customer, considerably taller than most of them are, to manage overly familiar liberties with Curley. The statues of this formidable boyo are life-size: he stood a good six feet three inches or so, until age, disappointment and sorrows diminished his stature somewhat, and he carried in his well-nourished prime anywhere from 200 to 240 pounds on his rangy frame.

Anyway, that's the way it goes, all the livelong day and into the night as well, every day

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of the year, the hundreds if not thousands of people (if you include those traveling Dock Square in wheeled vehicles) passing within a hundred feet or so of what must certainly be two among a very small number of memorial statues to convicted felons deliberately and knowingly erected by the people of American cities (true, Curley was pardoned by President Truman, in 1947, but one doesn't get a presidential pardon for having been the stick-out Boy Scout in his troop). The vast majority never notice those remembrances of the scoundrel past; the more perceptive but small minority notice but do not comprehend. Perhaps at most one or two unreconstructed local memoirists tip a hat or nod a hurried hello now and then, as the snows collect on Curley's shoulders, the sun and the rains beat down on his bodies, and the pigeons land on his two heads, in hasty recollection of the man who, all by himself, *was* Boston politics—and thus to a large degree, Boston, since the city and its election wars then were even more inseparable than they are today—for more than fifty years. And now into this chiefly uncaring, mostly unknowing, rapidly aging, and soon-enough dying, ragtag procession of mummers comes our Jack Beatty, with fire in his eye, commanding the few of us to cut out even those trivial gestures of respect, because Curley was a crook, you see, and a civic wrecker to boot. Well, I see his point, I truly do, and I can sympathize with it, but still I must say I'm not sure that we can bring it off.

Grasping the nettles firmly, we may as well start with the allegation that Curley was a crook. Indeed he was, and he had not only witnesses but court documents to prove it. The genial aspect of his seated statue may be taken not only as a sign of hospitality to the visitor to Boston but, quite as plausibly as well, as a signal meant to reassure some nervous novice bribe-giver that the recipient is both considerably experienced in the efficient management of such transactions and reliably able to guarantee that no party to another such with him will end up in the cold slammer for his pains. One would be as typical of Curley as the other. Twice Curley fetched up in the sneezer himself: in 1904 for impersonating an unlettered constituent at a Post Office Civil Service examination; and, again, in 1947, for some financial funny business with a government contract (he and some pals were said to have tried to finagle commissions on federal work projects—for swag of $60,000, a good sum in the 1940s). He was a man of parts.

But still and all, at least on the face of it, Jack Beatty, a Boston boy now forty-eight, would have seemed a good prospect—fully able, fully fit—to come to terms with that small larcenous failing of Curley's, in a firm and manly fashion. Indeed, on paper Beatty looked to have been a capital choice to research and write a definitive biography of Himself. And Beatty thought so too. Setting out on what would prove to be nearly four years pretty much (though not entirely; he has honest work as a senior editor at the *Atlantic*) devoted to tracking the old devil down, Beatty initially harbored the self-same idea. But as he delved, he changed his opinions, and when he at last emerged from the files of the Curley papers at Holy Cross College, in Worcester, his view of Curley had soured.

Now ordinarily I regard reliance upon aspects of the author's biography for interpretation of his book with the same bilious disapproval otherwise reserved for poker with a man called "Doc," or dinner in a place called "Mom's." Still, there are times when such resorts are not only appropriate but mandatory, and because Beatty's gradually developing ambivalence toward his subject, which gradually resolved into aversion (I'd say Beatty's defection from the ranks of secular, political Bostonian illuminati gets noticeably underway around page 270), is so manifest in this book, this is one of those occasions. Felicitously (though probably not intentionally) anticipating this perception, Beatty permitted himself to go on at much more forthright and generous length in an interview conducted by Jack Thomas for the *Boston Globe*. In the course of the interview, Beatty precisely addressed the question implicitly raised in his book. He told Thomas he began writing the book as a man who would have voted for Curley and finished it as one who would not have.

The transition must have been painful for him. Beatty was the seventh child born into a family headed by John J. Beatty, a janitor in the Boston public school system who, in the interest of what he termed "dignity," titularly transformed himself and all his fraternity into "custodians" as soon as he got control of the union. Beatty spent his childhood living in a Hancock Street three-decker in the Upham's

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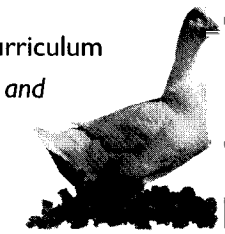

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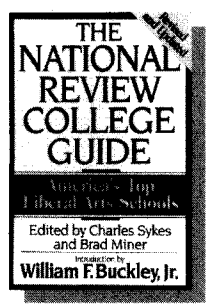

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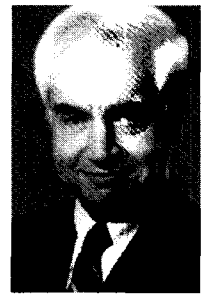
ı extension of our larger society, though, had something to do with it.)

Then The National Review College Guide had this to say: "Those who suppose ıat colleges cannot change for the better have only to turn to Adelphi for an ɛample to the contrary. Just about everything has been upgraded; the quality ˙its in-coming students; the quality of its faculty (in part ırough stricter rules for granting tenure); and the quality of its ırriculum.... Please note that the school's expansion has been companied by the elimination of its debts and the tripling ˙its endowment. We'll be keen observers of Adelphi's ɔntinued, astonishing growth."



Peter Diamandopoulos
President,
Adelphi University

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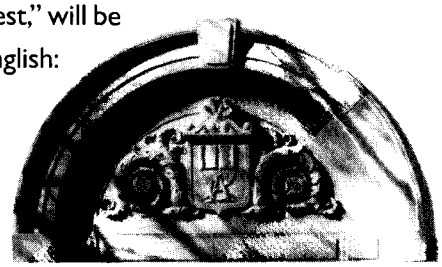

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Corner neighborhood of Dorchester. The family later moved to the Codman Square section, also in Dorchester and architecturally quite similar, but hospitably crowded with the families of cops and firemen and other city employees.

The "ethnic mix" of those neighborhoods in those days (to apply a term of much later provenance to a society that never dreamed of neighborhoods deliberately—much less judicially or legislatively—made ethnically and racially heterogeneous) was Irish-American, Roman Catholic, and Democrat. Likely as not it was Curley-Democrat as well, although, to be sure, not necessarily so. John F. "Honey Fitz" Fitzgerald, maternal grandfather of John F. Kennedy; Diamond Jim and Joe Timilty, founders of another Boston political dynasty that remained rambunctious into the last quarter of this century (when a later Joe took a fall in a real-estate scam); and the redoubtable Maurice Tobin, who became governor after following the path well-worn by other Curley protégés, first falling in, under the great man's smothering mentorship, and then falling out, into Curley's bitter enmity—these men had their fighting, biting partisans as well.

James Michael Curley's career began in 1897, when he made his first run for office (a seat on the Boston Common Council) in a cutaway coat and a brown checked vest purchased secondhand from Max Keezer's in Cambridge (last stop for glad rags of socially impeccable origins—they'd been worn out in the service of sleek Harvard toffs). Not giving up campaigning until the 1950s had begun (though turned out of office for the last time in 1949), Curley kept at it even after the voters of Boston had three times in succession rebuffed his exertions to become mayor again. He ran for alderman. He ran five times for Congress. He ran a total of ten times for mayor, three times for governor, and once for the U.S. Senate (in 1936, while hinting broadly that if successful he planned to challenge FDR for the 1940 Democratic presidential nomination). He was mayor four times, governor once, three-time winner for Congress: for three generations of Boston voters, and for a sizable number of Bostonians, he stood as the premiere politician.

At least 75 percent of us Bostonians live outside the actual borders of the city. Jack Beatty lives in rustic Carlisle now, twenty-two miles west, but he's still a Bostonian. We succeed in our harmless deceptions by reliance on our accent, indistinguishable from the real thing. And for those of us over sixty, say, as well as a good many under sixty who imbibed the fierce fevers at the parental and grandparental knees, a proper election in Curley's heyday became one including a contest between Curley and someone else. Because it was irrelevant to the indefatigable Curley in those bouts whether he had won or lost his last previous match, so, at least until the knell tolled for him, it was irrelevant to Bay State voters too.

For people at Boston's political ground zero in those days, such as Boston City Councillor at Large Albert L. "Dapper" O'Neil, the effect of Curley's relentless exertions was in most cases the intellectual equivalent of a tattoo. Fourteen when he first campaigned for Curley in the 1934 governor's race (Curley won that one), O'Neil in the early 1990s serenely and justifiably expects to top the council slate in each election, without spending any real money on campaigning. Dapper electioneers as the twenty-first century looms in the traditional Curley style of the late nineteenth century, albeit with some modifications. He substitutes a borrowed Winnebago, with bullhorns mounted on a roof rack, for the old-time neighborhood speaking platforms and the unamplified human voice. But as Dapper rolls through Readville and Hyde Park, Roslindale, West Roxbury, and Jamaica Plain, Allston and Brighton, the South End, Back Bay, Beacon Hill, Charlestown, the North End, East Boston, Downtown, and Southie, the principle remains the same: what he does—making personal contact with the voters, as best as today's circumstances allow—seems to work, and it doesn't cost a lot. That's the only kind of campaigning that O'Neil deems necessary. If the mode is antiquated and makes him an avatar, well, that is quite all right: it works. In an interview I had with O'Neil, he recalled Curley's, his exemplar's, approach with fondness:

> We'd go to rallies, and we'd have Up-Up Kelly [whose task it was to rise as Curley appeared in the hall and order: "Everybody up—up for the governor"], and Jack Murphy in the front row in this ragged coat, holes in the sleeves and all, and after Curley'd begun to speak, you'd see Jack

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start to wave his right hand, you know? Just a little, at first, but then he'd keep at it, and pretty soon he'd catch Curley's eye, and Curley'd stop and say, in his mighty Wurlitzer of a voice, "My good man, I'll take your question when I've finished this." And Jack'd start to cry and whimper, and he'd say: "No, no, Mister Curley. I just want them all to know what you did for my poor mother." Well, after a while, however long it was that Jack was supposed to cry, somebody in the back'd holler to get back to the speech, and Jack'd sit down, and Curley'd go back to his speech, and after a while you'd see Jack get up and head for the door, going off to the next rally, to do it all again.

O'Neil recalled a Curley rally in front of Amrhein's restaurant, at the intersection of Broadway and A Street in South Boston:

The guy running against him was a fellow name of Bigney, I think it was. Well, they hated each other. And Curley spotted Bigney back in the crowd, and he interrupts his speech and says: "Ah, there he is now, spyin' on me here. Just look back there at the hydrant; that's where the bastard's hidin', and that's just how big he is."

One year when he was running, I was his driver, and I'd pick him up at the house in the morning and he'd have his coat on, and I'd see that he forgot and I'd say: "Governor, the loot." He'd go to the bowl and take out at least a dozen silver dollars, and put them in his pocket, and as we'd go along he'd see someone and say: "Pull over here." And I would do that. And there'd be this poor fellow, down-and-out, sittin' on the sidewalk, and Curley'd roll down the window and say: "Good morning, my dear friend. I'm James Michael Curley," and give him a silver dollar. And then maybe a woman, just standing on the sidewalk, and he'd give her one—she was probably just waiting for a bus.

It is the retrospective contemplation of that sort of misconduct, amounting to the purchase of votes at retail, sixty years removed from it and the ethical and moral milieu in which it occurred, that arouses the stern disapproval of a Jack Beatty in the 1990s. Today, anyone who reads a daily newspaper or, God save the mark, even watches television news in a state at least bordering on consciousness is inured to (and untroubled by) present-day observations of shameless local, state, and federal candidates frantically purchasing votes in wholesale lots, by making lavish promises of taxpayer-funded salary and benefit increases to such special-interest groups as teachers' unions, organized government employees, Social Security recipients, farmers, and so on far into the night. Perhaps there is a moral or ethical distinction, in addition to the undisputed legal sanction, to be drawn between the two varieties of conduct, but I must confess it escapes me.

Not Beatty, though; in the *Globe* interview, he was invited to comment on this compendious subject: "the myth still popular among Boston's Irish that Curley was a Robin Hood who took from the rich and gave to the poor and that his corruption was balanced by the good that he did, by the playgrounds and hospitals that he built, and by his willingness to stand up to the Yankees." Beatty was not a bit fazed:

That's the legend, but the facts tell us something else, and the Irish can't blink at it, because the legend doesn't take into account that Boston's economy was hurt by Curley's role as Robin Hood, by his Shamrock [*sic*] politics, by his demagoguery and ethnic polarization. I'm not saying Curley caused Boston's economic decline, because the seeds go 'way back, but by God, he didn't arrest it, and he made it worse by heavy taxation of commercial property and by padding the city payroll so that when he left office in 1949, Boston had more public employees per capita than any other city in the country. So Curley was not merely robbing the rich, he was robbing the future, and he created the city we remember, where it was the Edison and the gas company where young men wanted to work, and why? Nobody could envision a vibrant private sector, because it was dead.

True enough, but true also is this Beatty judgment from *The Rascal King*. The generation of Irish immigrants personified by Curley's father, Michael, as a result of the Civil War

would experience a new relationship with the Protestant establishment of Boston. One scholar calls it "deference democracy," a system under which Irish voters elected Yankee mayors and received tokenist patronage in return. To enjoy even these meager benefits of cooperation, however, the Irish had to forget a good deal of fresh history—and not just the odd convent-burning by liquored-up Protestant mobs, but official government persecution. Social amnesia cannot long be willed, however, and there would come a time when the Irish would remember. The instrument of their remembrance would be

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James Michael Curley, who would reach back beyond his father's generation to reclaim for politics the ethnic bitterness stemming from the events of the [eighteen] fifties that had been kept out of politics for decades.

It is, I submit, retroactively asking rather a lot of a man dead for nearly thirty-six years now to assert that while he was certainly the first effective local champion of his co-religionists, systematically kept down in Boston for more than half a century when Curley made his maiden flight in politics in 1897, he must now be held posthumously responsible for choosing means that five decades later proved to have been poorly adapted to the economic betterment of the post–World War II city. For one thing, to do so is to raise the Heisenberg principle. As repugnant to very late twentieth-century American liberal political principles as Curley's methods may now seem, it is undeniable that they were, at the time when the need was most desperate and immediate, responsive to a situation of egregious, systematic, ethnic and religious oppression that would ignite solidarity protest parades of militant thousands in support of any ethnic-religious minority so mistreated today. Moreover, *Curley's methods worked.*

Patrick Collins, Boston's second mayor (1903–1905) of Irish birth, was far more well behaved, scrupulous and decent, and so able to mediate differences between his community and the Protestant majority. President Charles Eliot of Harvard (although himself not above a bit of political chicanery now and again) lent his name to a proposal to raise a memorial statue in tribute to Collins after his death in office. However laudable Collins's unquestioned virtue and high principles, at the end of his day his fellow Catholics in Boston remained in status quo ante, hastily doffing their sweaty scally caps and tugging gratefully at their forelocks for whatever paltry concessions their economic and social oppressors might deign to proffer them. That is the reason why Curley, the scoundrel, achieved legendary status even during his lifetime, but only careful scholars today recognize Collins's name—and Beatty, of all people, son of the Boston janitor who made himself and all his friends *custodians* for the sake of their common dignity, should have no trouble understanding what that reason was.

And, indeed, Beatty doesn't. On one of Beatty's childhood report cards, a nun complained, "Jack Beatty reads too much." He may think too much today, for he has a telling response to any urge to employ situational ethics as the criterion for Curley's deeds and misdeeds. "I do have an affection for Curley's style and swagger and rhetorical juice, but I deplore his politics of ethnic and class division," Beatty said in his *Globe* interview. "And sure, you can say that, well, he was only hitting the Yankees, but it's the same thing Republicans have been doing now for 25 years, setting one group against another. It's the political arithmetic Gov. [Mario] Cuomo discussed at the Democratic convention—addition by subtraction and multiplication by division. That's what Curley specialized in, and you can't deplore it today and wink at it back then."

Well, perhaps not. But then again, I grew up in Rockland, a small town about twenty miles south of Boston. My grandfather, Charles J. Higgins, was the town treasurer. Charlie, like most Irish-American Massachusetts politicians of his vintage, however small-town or honest, was acquainted with Curley. One day in the early 1950s my grandfather and I were together at the dedication of the town's Memorial Stadium. I was somewhere around twelve years old. Curley for some reason was there too, and my grandfather introduced us. In 1957, either just before or just after I had graduated from high school, I was in Boston with two or three equally gangling, smart-mouth companions, either on Beacon Street at the State House or else on School Street at the Old City Hall, when an old man emerged. He singled me out from my friends as though a seventeen-year-old had been the very image of a twelve-year-old, and insisted on shaking my hand. "George," he asked, "how's your grandfather?"

I had to ask James Michael Curley what his name was. To this day, I do not know how he did what he did, but I do know this: it would not altogether surprise me if I were to find myself one day in Boston near those bronze statues, hear one of them cough, and have it ask me again how my grandfather is. I suppose Curley was, at the heart of it, just a sybaritic old crook, living in his, not the city's, twenty-one-room mansion with the shamrock-cutout shutters (for the convenient daily enraging of neighboring rich Yankees), the whole of it

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built by city contractors at no expense to him, and furnished with the purchases that ill-gotten gains could bring, just as Jack Beatty says—says indignantly, in fact.

Still and all, the statutes of limitations have run out and the defendant is deceased. I'm not really sure that even the most right-thinking of deconstructionist, revisionist, Bostonian connoisseurs of local myth and legend, if any such there be, could without mental reservation accept Jack Beatty's harsh, stern penance. Or even if we should. Surely now, at this late date, it ought to be all right to persist a little longer in the old romance of Curley's days.

Cairene Treasures

IN AN ANTIQUE LAND: AN INFIDEL IN EGYPT. *By Amitav Ghosh. Knopf. $23.*

Reviewed by JONATHAN M. ELUKIN

Like the Cairo Geniza, the wellspring of this seductive book, Amitav Ghosh's scholarly memoir is a treasure of interconnected historical ironies. The thriving Jewish community of medieval Cairo deposited many of its documents in the Geniza—a kind of cellar in the synagogue—in order to avoid inadvertently desecrating the biblical passages and invocations of God that peppered the writings. Letters, accounts, biblical manuscripts, and printed texts piled up in the Geniza until its discovery at the end of the nineteenth century. One Geniza text happily brought Amitav Ghosh to the Egyptian villages of Nashâwy and Lataîfa.

Ghosh, who comes from a Hindu family, was an anthropology graduate student at Oxford in 1978 when he came upon a collection of Geniza letters translated by the famous scholar S. D. Goitein. In the twelfth century, the Cairene Jewish merchant Khalaf ibn Ishaq wrote a routine letter to his protégé and business partner, Abraham ben Yiju, in Mangalore, on the southwestern coast of India. Amidst business concerns and gossip, Khalaf sent greetings to Ben Yiju's Indian slave. Captivated by this cosmopolitan world that had

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touched his homeland, Ghosh embarked on the study of Arabic. After several years in Egypt during the early 1980s, he returned to the story of the slave, mastered enough Judeo-Arabic—the language of much of the Geniza documents—and began to trace the history of the slave and his master Ben Yiju.

Ghosh's excellent account of the Geniza's discovery is marred by persistent intrusions of a sweeping anti-imperialist sentiment—reminiscent of Edward Said's *Orientalism*—that is not worthy of his otherwise profound capacity for empathy. Here is an example: "By the end of the eighteenth century, Egypt had become the scholarly counterpart of those great landmasses that were then being claimed and explored by European settlers: unknown to herself, she was already well on her way to becoming a victim of the Enlightenment's conception of knowledge and discovery." The true discovery of the Geniza came at the end of the nineteenth century when Solomon Schechter, the reader in Hebrew at Cambridge, succeeded in winning the support of the local Jewish elite. They gave him free access to the Geniza and permission to take to England whatever documents he wanted.

Ghosh feels that England—and the West—was not worthy of the Geniza:

> Thus, having come to Fustat from the far corners of the known world, a second history of travel carried the documents even further. The irony is that for the most part they went to countries which would have long since destroyed the Geniza had it been part of their own history. Now it was Masr [Egypt], which had sustained the Geniza for almost a millennium, that was left with no trace of its riches: not a single scrap or shred of paper to remind her of that aspect of her past.

This is unfair. Most Western countries have been largely scrupulous about preserving the documents of their pasts, including the records of disenfranchised peoples. Ghosh is not as severe with Egypt, which had ignored the Geniza: "In its home country however, nobody took the slightest notice of its dispersal. In some profound sense, the Islamic high culture of Masr had never really noticed, never found a place for the parallel history the Geniza represented, and its removal only confirmed a particular vision of the past."

Ghosh's empathy is more in evidence, fortunately, in his accounts of Egyptian village life and the career of Ben Yiju. Voices of the parochial, religiously intolerant villagers resonate strangely with those of the cosmopolitan and rather pluralistic traders of the Geniza. His readers can laugh with him as he endures the countless and inevitable questions about whether people in India burn their dead or worship cows. He makes us feel the sincere, almost oppressive hospitality of the village, although it was tinged with a kind of morbid curiosity about a stranger whom they saw as an uncircumcised cow worshiper. We come to know many of the villagers. We mourn with Shaikh Musa at the death of his son; we are wary of the machinations of Abu-'Ali, the village mogul; we sympathize with Jabir, a young man who missed his chance for money on the "outside"; and we rejoice with 'Eid, who made a love match despite great odds.

Ghosh is a superb social historian, and the voices of the villagers help to vivify the distant lives of Ben Yiju and his correspondents. From the tiny scraps of information provided by the Geniza, Ghosh tells the dramatic story of Ben Yiju's career in Aden and then in Mangalore. We follow him through his marriage to a local Indian woman, Ashur, and his constant correspondence with his partners in Aden. We know his tastes in sweets and fondness for high-quality paper. Ghosh even squeezes life into the reference to Bomma, the favored Indian slave who went on periodic drinking binges.

The equilibrium of these two societies was soon destroyed. For modern Egypt, the war between Iraq and Iran gave many Egyptians the chance to take civilian jobs in Iraq. The money these young men sent home transformed the villages that Ghosh had known. Once-poor families now received the first miraculous refrigerators and televisions. Traditional social relations foundered as status was no longer dependent on family lineage but on cash. There was no nostalgia among the villagers for that lost world. They had long felt themselves, in Ghosh's words, to be in a situation "that was shamefully anachronistic, a warp upon time."

The society of the Geniza had suffered, too, under the twin pressures of invasions by Christians from Sicily and Almohad Muslims from western Africa. Both left forced conversions, massacres, and refugees in their wake. Ben

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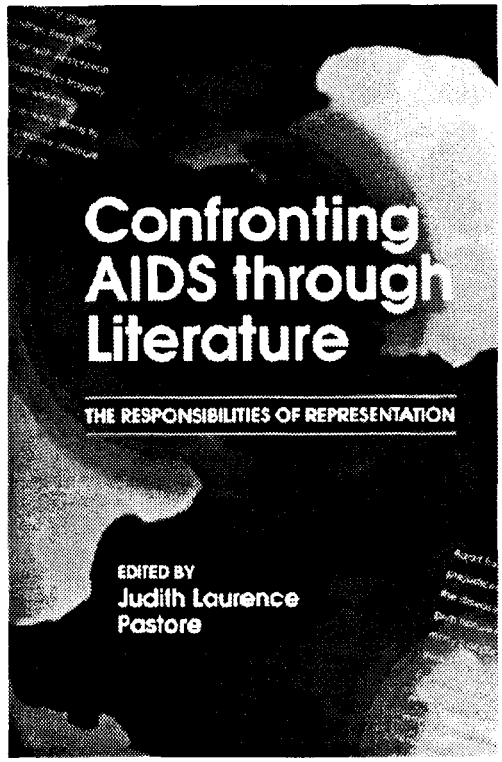

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Yiju, having returned to Aden from Mangalore, was anxious to secure a marriage for his daughter. He was desperate for news of his family and wrote to friends, confessing he was "sick at heart." The final blow to this multicultural society of the Indian Ocean came, according to Ghosh, at the end of the fifteenth century when the Portuguese tried to expel all Muslim traders from India. Ghosh's anger at the West is heartfelt but again perhaps too sweeping: "Soon, the remains of the civilization that had brought Ben Yiju to Mangalore were devoured by that unquenchable, demonic thirst that has raged ever since, for almost five hundred years, over the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf."

Some passions are homegrown, however, and Ghosh documents their first stirrings in the villages of Egypt. Islamic fundamentalism had begun to touch the people among whom he once lived. Young men began to sport traditional beards and white robes. Perhaps Ghosh should not have been so surprised, since even the tolerance of his friends was based on a seemingly benign incredulity that someone could believe in anything other than Islam.

But Ghosh cannot help blaming the West for corrupting the discourse between a modern Indian and Muslim. While arguing with a local Muslim cleric about the progress of their respective countries, Ghosh accuses the West of saturating their worlds with a technology of violence. Power was now the only viable way the two ancient societies could judge each other: "I could have told him a great deal about it, seen at first hand, its libraries, its museums, its theatres, but it wouldn't have mattered. We would have known, both of us, that all that was mere fluff: in the end, for millions and millions of people on the landmasses around us, the West meant only this—science and tanks and guns and bombs." Whatever the true cause of its demise, the "centuries of dialogue" that had linked Ben Yiju and his fellow travelers of different nationalities and religions, and that might have linked Ghosh to the cleric, had atrophied.

Despite his anti-Western animus, Ghosh is deeply sensitive to the ironies of history that have survived both medieval and modern crises. On leaving Egypt for the last time, Ghosh found his way to the tomb of the medieval saint Sidi Abu-Hasira, where there was a famous annual festival. It was carefully controlled by the authorities. To his surprise, he discovered that the saint was a Jew who had been venerated by Jews and Muslims alike. Ghosh's difficulty in explaining his interest in the tomb to a suspicious policeman also signaled the end of the legacy of Ben Yiju: "The remains of those small, indistinguishable, intertwined histories, Indian and Egyptian, Muslim and Jewish, Hindu and Muslim, had been partitioned long ago."

Still, he felt the tomb was a victory of sorts: "It seemed uncanny that I had never known all those years that in defiance of the enforcers of History, a small remnant of Bomma's world had survived, not far from where I had been living." Ultimately, Ghosh's book, particularly his resurrection of the story of Ben Yiju—with the help of Western libraries—is a victory as well. We know that Ben Yiju made it back to his family, and his daughter Sitt al-Dar married his nephew, the learned Surur. ("A list recording Sitt al-Dar's wedding trousseau, now preserved in St. Petersburg, is proof that this child of a Nair woman from the Malabar was wedded in 1156 to her Sicilian cousin, in Fustat.") Thanks to the preservation of the Geniza, and to Ghosh, a Hindu educated at Oxford, Ben Yiju and his world have not died. The author and his work become eloquent testimony as well to the dramatic ironies of history.

The Ties That Bind

THE IDEA OF CIVIL SOCIETY. *By Adam B. Seligman. Free Press. $24.95.*

Reviewed by CHARLES H. HAMILTON

The idea of civil society has recently gained currency as a result of two related failures: the breakdown of the communist hegemony and the end of the Reagan years. Ironically, each failure highlights the same problem: that humanity cannot be perfected through govern-

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ment, no matter what kind of government. Is there, then, an alternative sphere of human action to which we can repair? Many American conservatives are now saying that they realize government cannot solve problems and that "empowerment" must come from without. Perhaps such a lack of trust in government is not surprising from those exiting a defeated administration. Those going through the revolving door in the other direction are calling for change that confuses government and society. By contrast, several years ago Polish dissident Adam Michnik presented the predicament in a way that applies to many societies: "The problem faced by Polish society is that from the official point of view a civil society doesn't exist. Society is not recognized as capable of organizing itself to defend its particular interests and points of view."

"Civil society" is an inviting term: vaguely classic, properly amorphous, and, well, civil. Not political in the usual sense, nor individualistic, nor communal, civil society is simply the arena of voluntary action. It encompasses a myriad of institutions both formal and informal—churches, schools, businesses, voluntary associations, communities, clubs, and so forth—where people pursue their individual and common goals: moral, spiritual, and material.

The modern condition, writes Adam Seligman in *The Idea of Civil Society*, is characterized by "a fundamental crisis of representing society." "What binds society together," he asks, and how do we "constitute a sense of community among and between social actors?" Of course, this is one of the most basic questions. Innumerable commentators have reflected upon how to organize life and conceptualize the social order; how to reconcile, ever again, the private and public, the individual and social, the egoistic and altruistic. But since Aristotle's pronouncement that "man is a political animal," there has been a tendency to assume that anything social can only work under the direction of the political.

In this book, the reader could easily become confused about the notion of civil society. While ostensibly "a clear exposition of the developing idea of civil society, its historical antecedents, the social context of its emergence and transformation (in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries), and its continuing relevance," the author concludes that his book is "an argument on the inadequacy of the idea of civil society." It is not at all clear why that is. My own sense is that the author became bollixed up as he covered much too much ground with much too much obscure academic jargon and theorizing; he loses any essence that the notion of civil society may have. What is one to make, for instance, of a sentence such as this: "The institutionalization of civil society in terms of citizenship implied the representation of society in terms of the workings of a universal-abstract reason, which, in the public realm, was embodied in the idea of universal citizenship"?

Seligman takes on the idea of civil society in several ways. There are hints of a coherent meaning and development of the idea if one reads carefully. First, the author gives a selective summary of the intellectual tradition that has brought civil society to the twentieth century. He starts with Grotius and the important natural law tradition. John Locke is a fleeting, transitional figure. The author is quite right to move on quickly to the Scottish Enlightenment of Francis Hutcheson, Adam Ferguson, and Adam Smith. With them the idea of civil society becomes firmly grounded.

Adam Ferguson, for instance, in his 1767 classic *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, establishes civil society as the modern social change away from barbarism. The ancient assumption that political participation in the polis was everything and individual action nothing no longer held. Not only was society based on individuals, but it didn't need a visible hand of any sort organizing, controlling, and forming everything. There was, by contrast, a natural human propensity for cooperation and social development, imperfect though it was always held to be. Civil society was, in Ferguson's famous phrase, "the result of human action, but not the execution of any human design." As Kant made perfectly clear later, civil society was not merely the realm of economic interests. It fully incorporated the moral individuality of mankind.

It became common to see the institutions of civil society and the political state as largely independent. There was an uneasy relationship of mutual antagonism and dependence. A limited rule of law was essential, but intrusions into how people peacefully pursued their moral values and their economic interests were seen as destructive of progress and civilization. As George Unwin observed in his

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Studies in Economic History: "The expansion of England in the seventeenth century was an expansion of society and not of the State. Society expanded to escape from the pressure of the State."

Seligman goes on to mention, but fails to develop, two opposing traditions that follow from the Scottish Enlightenment view of civil society. The first rests on Hegel. Deeply influenced by the Scottish Enlightenment, Hegel clearly established private ownership of property and the marketplace as preeminent features of civil society. Many have also argued that, with Hegel, and certainly with Marx, civil society lost a relatively independent image and was ultimately folded back into political society. Later in the nineteenth century, various ideas of citizenship further trivialized the idea of civil society. Citizenship came to encompass more and more within the narrowing confines of political participation. It thereby served to institutionalize "the idea of civil society in the polity" in Europe and in the United States.

A more distinctly sociological tradition was built upon the work of Tocqueville, Durkheim, and Weber. It emphasized the separation of the idea of civil society as a complex of autonomous and voluntary institutions from the idea of the political. This was not just theoretical musing. The United States was an exceptional example of this perspective, as Tocqueville famously knew, "Americans of all ages, all stations in life, and all types of disposition are forever forming associations. . . . They can do hardly anything for themselves, and none of them is in a position to force his fellows to help him. They would all therefore find themselves helpless if they did not learn to help each other voluntarily."

These two traditions remain with us. But the blurring of the distinction between government and society effectively makes the idea of civil society disappear from public discourse. The "*corps intermediaires*" of Montesquieu and the "little platoons" of Burke have been ignored in the East and West. People in central Europe and the former Soviet Union are trying to fill the vacuum left by a corrupt polity that had systematically destroyed most elements of civil society—except the church in some countries. Nationalism and ethnic violence have become a favored way to fill the void. In the West, civil society has been ignored in favor of an unstable amalgam of extreme individualism and a modern version of the ancient polis on a national scale.

Seligman is quite right that these problems have risen to crisis proportions. This is not evidence, however, that "the idea of civil society itself becomes the problem rather than the solution of modern existence." On the contrary, these difficulties make thinking about things in terms of civil society even more important. For example, a number of contemporary thinkers have written within the tradition of civil society, including Michael Oakeshott with his brilliant discussion of civil association, Robert Nisbet with his emphasis on the dangers of individualism out of touch with intermediate institutions, and Edward Shils with his development of the idea of civility and a focus on our common collective self-consciousness.

If the ancient polis, a leviathan, or individualism can neither free nor perfect humanity, where does one go? Our modern condition remains what every "modern" condition has been since at least Adam Ferguson's time. The ties that bind people must be largely voluntary *and* political, but there is a delicate scale to be balanced. Both the West and the East are unbalanced. Political participation (political freedom) is necessary, but it is far from sufficient. Indeed, it may be true that too great an extension of the political is self-defeating. In any case, additional consideration is needed for emancipating, protecting, and expanding the idea of civil society.

Unreliable Narrator

DIARY. VOLUMES 1–3. *Witold Gombrowicz. Edited by Jan Kott, translated by Lillian Vallee. Northwestern University Press. $29.95 each. Paper, $12.95 each.*

Reviewed by SUSAN MIRON

"Thanks be to you, Almighty God, for the Diary. One of the most dramatic moments in my life happened ten years ago when the first fragments of the Diary were being born," Witold Gombrowicz reminisced in an undated

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✪ SUSAN MIRON's essays have appeared in *Partisan Review, Salmagundi,* and the *New Leader.*

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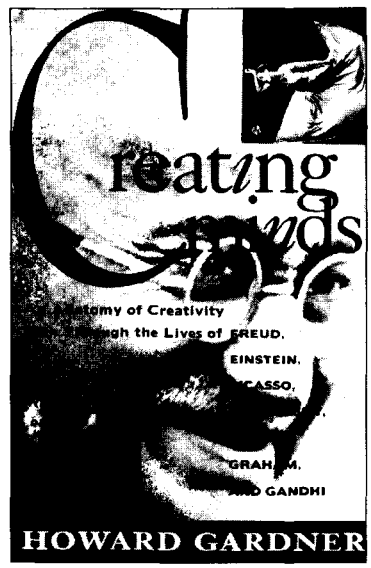
"Tuesday" entry in 1960. "Oh, how I quaked! I cast off the grotesque language of the works I had written to that point as if I were taking off armor—that is how vulnerable I felt in the diary. I was so overcome by the fear that I would emerge pale in these simple words. Was this not my fourth debut and the most dangerous of all?"

The irreverent and ever-provocative Polish novelist and playwright Witold Gombrowicz (1904–69) enjoys a reputation as unclassifiable and unstable as the man himself, who has been called the bête noire of Polish literature, an enfant terrible, a crank, scourge, hermit, classy heel, and the anti-intellectual's intellectual. Gombrowicz's influence as a writer and intellectual leader was at its height in his native Poland in the 1970s; he was then half-tolerated, half-forbidden. The poet Adam Zagajewski has remarked in the Fall 1992 *Partisan Review* that this "messiah of doctoral dissertations" just didn't seem to be "a writer for hard times. In the eighties when severe martial law was declared in Poland, his influence among the intelligentsia subsided. He was too critical, too skeptical, much too epistemological."

Gombrowicz wrote incessantly of feeling "enslaved" by being a Pole and recalls his privileged childhood as one in which "I did everything I could to march out of step with the parade." "Gombrowicz exhilarated the public with his buffoonery," Czeslaw Milosz remembers in *Beginning with My Streets* (1992). "In fact, he proceeded by a game of constant provocation, cornering the reader into an admission of unpalatable truths. Of a philosophical mind, but completely free from any respect for the sort of philosophy taught in universities, he had no reverence whatsoever for literature. He derided it as a snobbish ritual, and if he practiced it, he attempted to get rid of all its accepted rules."

Reflecting on his three-volume, thousand-page *Diary*, which first appeared in the Polish émigré review, *Kultura* (published in Paris), and which begins with the infamous "Monday: Me, Tuesday: Me, Wednesday: Me, Thursday: Me," Gombrowicz recalls his delight in discovering "the potential of everyday language. I was an avant-garde writer, an innovator, an outsider, moreover, and I felt increasingly crushed by the weight of war, revolution, exile and twenty million Argentinian cows." He thought of his *Diary* as the intrusion into Euro-

HOWARD GARDNER ON
THE PUZZLE OF GENIUS.



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pean culture of a Polish yokel, "with all the mistrust, common sense and realism of a peasant," and sensed—correctly—that his serialized *Diary* would insure his literary reputation. Presciently he forecasted in his last autobiographical work, *A Kind of Testament*, "I'll gradually seep through. I don't want to be like a wave breaking against a cliff, but in my diary, I want to be like water that soaks, drenches, saturates."

Gombrowicz's water metaphor is curiously apt, as the Atlantic Ocean played a significant role in his fate. Invited by a Polish shipping company to sail on the maiden voyage of the *Chobry*, he found himself stranded in South America, the war in Europe having begun. A 1964 diary entry tells of his mythic emergence from exilic drowning and the psychological liberation it offered:

> While walking in the Tiergarten, I was recovering from oblivion the incredible moment when I, a 1939 Pole, found myself in Argentina, alone, alone on land lost in oceans, like a fish tail, reaching the south pole, of the loneliness of Argentina on the map, its disappearance in waters, its being pushed to the bottom, drowning in distances. Alone, lost, cut off, alien, unknown, a drowned man. . . . I left for Argentina accidentally, for only two weeks, if by some quirk of fate the war had not broken out, I would have returned to Poland—but I did not conceal that when the door was bolted and I was locked in Argentina, it was as if I had finally heard my own voice.

Begun fifteen years into Gombrowicz's twenty-four-year stay in Argentina, the *Diary* marked his return to writing in Polish, which he then continued to do, despite being a banned writer in Poland for many decades and never returning there. In 1952, as the *Diary* begins, he is working as a secretary in a Buenos Aires bank for about a hundred dollars a month, "an eminent anti-talent in banking matters. I understood nothing about all those documents."

Looking back years later, Gombrowicz reflects, "People buy a diary because the author is famous, while I wrote mine in order to become famous. Only there did I indulge in open criticism of modern culture. My audacity amazes me. And the nonchalance of this offensive, as well as its bitterness! . . . I was nothing, so I could do anything." A 1957 diary entry further explains the effrontery behind the dozens of potshots Gombrowicz directed toward important literary and philosophical figures throughout these pages:

> My independence, self-sufficiency, or even frivolous impudence—all this was a result of my social and geographical isolation. In prewar Poland I was treated nonchalantly, almost ignored—then I was put on the censor's index by the Communist regime—and here, in Argentina, I was deprived of even a literary cafe. . . . I became bold because I had absolutely nothing to lose: neither honors, nor earnings, nor friends.

Born to a well-to-do gentry family in 1904, Gombrowicz studied law in Warsaw, and philosophy and economics in Paris, making his literary debut in 1933 with an outrageous short story collection, *Memoirs from a Time of Immaturity*. During his long exile Gombrowicz had few close friends, but he certainly had a loyal and devoted admirer in his youth, the brilliant Polish-Jewish writer and artist Bruno Schulz, whom Gombrowicz writes about at great length at the opening of *Diary: Volume Three*. Schulz did a great deal to promote Gombrowicz, and while Gombrowicz appreciated his generous and unwavering support, particularly of his novel *Ferdydurke*, he had a lifelong perceptual problem with Jews, which kept him from ever entering serious relationships with them. So few personal accounts of Schulz survive—he was shot in the streets of his small town by a Nazi in 1944, and most of his friends were also killed in the war—that Gombrowicz's account is all the more valuable, however offensive certain passages seem. (The term "unreliable narrator" springs frequently to mind when reading the *Diary*, often considered an "autobiographical novel" because of its many playful and teasing moments of pure fiction posing as "truth.") Of Schulz he writes:

> Were we friends? Colleagues? How often we were mentioned together under "Polish experimental prose." And yet if anyone existed in Polish art who was 100 percent my opposite, it was he. . . . Bruno was a man who was denying himself. He wanted annihilation. I wanted realization. He was born to be a slave. I was born to be a master. He wanted denigration. I wanted to be "above" and "superior" to. He was of the Jewish race. I was from a family of Polish gentry. . . . While he subordinated himself to art, I wanted

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to be "above" it. . . . In fact we were conspirators . . . consumed with experimenting with a certain explosive material called Form.

Gombrowicz was obsessed with the notion of Form, which in a quirky 1953 entry, merges with two of his other recurring obsessions—Polishness and immaturity. He yearns to "soar above Poland," just as he imagines he has soared above style and form. "In a way," he announces, "I feel like Moses. . . . I, like Moses, am leading the Poles out of the slavery of that form. I am leading the Pole out of himself," he declares in one of the *Diary*'s most outlandish riffs, all manic energy, which by the next entry hits the ground with a thud. "I am beginning to fear that the feuilleton writers will give me a well-deserved thrashing. But what should I do with my overweening pride? Shall I go see a doctor?"

While Gombrowicz was, I think, not an anti-Semite, he was nonetheless a Pole. His running commentary on Jews is both bizarre and thought-provoking; one wonders how many of his Polish contemporaries held similar views. Gombrowicz was convinced that the "Jewish nation" claiming it "is just like the others" is as silly as "Michelangelo claiming that he was in no way different from anyone else, or Chopin demanding a 'normal' life, or Beethoven assuring himself that even he had a right to equality. Too bad! Those who were given the right to superiority don't have the right to equality." Later he muses that even the "life of the most healthy Jew is almost always the life of an outstanding man. . . . One could say that even the average Jew is sentenced to greatness, only because he is a Jew. And not just to greatness. He is sentenced to a suicidal and desperate battle with his own form because he does not like himself." Yet Gombrowicz senses the Jew's "mission as a chosen people," a notion, he accepts fully, that has throughout history been "a secret provocation of fate." "The incalculable abyss of crimes perpetrated on the Jews has permeated me through and through forever," a "Friday" entry in 1954 reads.

Gombrowicz pokes fun and gives a tongue-lashing to a large number of cultural and intellectual figures he believes to be overrated, but he never forgets to include himself in his parade of taunts and jibes. His *Diary* is every bit as quirky and caustic, sarcastic and irresistible as this ex-aristocrat who likened his Polishness to having a hunchback. With volume three now available in a superb translation (a truly Herculean effort by Lillian Vallee), the *Diary* will surely stand as one of the most extraordinary personal journals of this century. However, even the most conscientious, enthusiastic reviewer shudders, remembering Gombrowicz's 1954 italicized warning:

You should know that I forbid you to speak about me in a boring, everyday, ordinary way. I staunchly forbid this. I demand a holiday word for myself. I punish those who allow themselves to speak about me boringly and wisely. I punish them cruelly: I die on their lips and they end up with an oral cavity full of my dead body.

Two Cultures

DAYS OF OBLIGATION: AN ARGUMENT WITH MY MEXICAN FATHER. *By Richard Rodriguez. Viking. $21.*

Reviewed by MANFRED WOLF

In a conversation I recently had with Richard Rodriguez, he talked about his love of duality and mythic oppositions. "I see the world in images, archetypes," he told me. "But I also see the paradoxes. Mexico is old and pessimistic, but the average age is fifteen. Meanwhile, the United States is hopeful and young, but we experience the graying of America." His own father, he continued, is formal, sober, very Mexican, but he came to America to seek an easier, less careworn life.

Richard Rodriguez's *Days of Obligation: An Argument with My Mexican Father* is a meditation on being an American born of Mexican parents in California. Rodriguez's perceptions are so far-reaching that his autobiographical base inevitably broadens into a study of Mexicanness and Americanness, of Mexico and America as concepts, as ideas, as mythic entities.

The argument with his Mexican father referred to in the book's subtitle is Rodriguez's

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inner argument, for he sees two essential tendencies in himself and indeed in California: an American, innocent, Protestant buoyancy posed against a Spanish, experienced, Catholic cynicism. Although his father is comfortably assimilated in Sacramento, California, Rodriguez continues to see in his gravity and decorum the Mexican heritage that alternately weighs on his son and gives him a sense of the world as it truly is.

Rodriguez apprehends his dualities in precise yet poetic prose. One of his almost allegorical vignettes describes the waitress in a twenty-four-hour restaurant, divorced, newly blond (her painted eyebrows "are jet-black migraines"), anti-maternal; when she cleans the table, she wipes off its littered past, making it new. She represents the possibilities as well as the loosening and unraveling of America. Her opposite number in Mexico is indoors, at home, sustained by the family. Children in the latter kind of household are the confirmation of the past. The men are father or son, defending and defended by the others. That world is feminine, private, while the Anglo world is adventurous, raucous, and public.

It is into this tempting "Protestant" world that the Mexicans in the United States are thrust. Away from the voluptuous, motherly Church, away from the memory of Mexico, they taste the pleasures of independence and assertiveness, anarchy and renewal. The slow conversion to American ways is painful for the older generation, and momentous for the younger. More concretely, many become attracted to Evangelicalism. "Two teenagers from Latin America tell me they converted to evangelical Protestantism because American Protestants came to their villages in suits and ties," Rodriguez reports. "The evangelical appearance advertises an end to failure."

This attraction occurs among both Mexicans in America and Latinos in Latin America. Rodriguez describes the amazing growth of Evangelicalism in that part of the world most of us think of as solidly Roman Catholic. Evidently there, too, the appeal of the Protestant way is that it gives a sense of opportunity, restores to the individual a belief in actively working not only toward his salvation but also toward his prosperity. It's an old story, but here played out in a new setting, and very much in our own time. One consequence of this development is that the American influence in those parts of the world is growing, though at the expense of a certain psychological and cultural depth.

Rodriguez persistently causes our usual perspectives to shift. It's not the Indians who were engulfed by the Spaniards but, he argues, the other way round. Mexico has absorbed the conquistadors, assimilated them. "Spanish is now an Indian language. Mexico City has become the metropolitan see of the Spanish-speaking world." And he upsets the now-fashionable belief in retaining one's ethnicity within a multicultural society by his championing a new melting pot; after all, "Mexico City is the capital of modernity, for in the sixteenth century . . . Mexico initiated the task of the twenty-first century—the renewal of the old, the known world, through miscegenation. Mexico carries the idea of a round world to its biological conclusion." It's a vision, at once sensible and radical, of the future against the grain of our separatist times.

This view of the Indianization of Spanish culture is consonant with recent thinking about the development of cultures away from the homeland. The Dutch sociologist Rob Kroes, for instance, in his book *De leegte van Amerika: een massacultuur in de wereld* (Amsterdam, 1992) has argued that transplanted cultures often develop the way Creole languages do—away from the mother tongue they assimilate alien elements quickly and hospitably and take on newer and more variegated features, becoming, as they do so, markedly different from the original language.

In California, too, Rodriguez argues, it is not exactly the Anglos who swamped the Spanish. White Protestants accepted Spanish customs in order to celebrate their distance from their own past, for "Vestiges of Spanish colonial served to remind Protestants that they were no longer part of the East." Such revision of commonly held notions is most startling when Rodriguez reinterprets *machismo*: whatever Americans mean by it, Mexicans find it akin to *gravitas*, located in the sober, care-taking male, brave, chivalrous, silent. Since Rodriguez's father—a formal, sensitive man—is the incarnation of that kind of *machismo*, the argument with him is ultimately unequal, for the tragic view of life propounded by the father is now lived by the son.

By including early in his book a moving account of the ravages that surround him,

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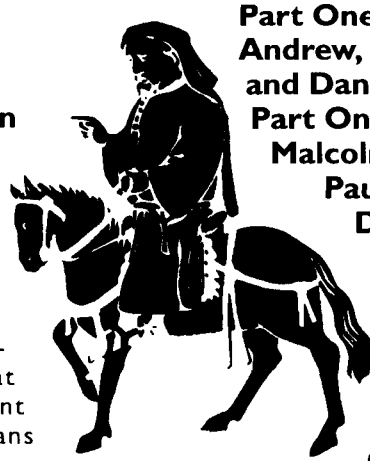

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Rodriguez, a gay man in AIDS-ridden San Francisco, shows how he has mellowed since his first autobiography, *Hunger of Memory* (1982). *Days of Obligation* is gentler than *Hunger of Memory*, which turned at times into a polemic against affirmative action. Not that Rodriguez has fully changed his mind on that score, for he still believes that a common culture is necessary and that "diversity is a liquid noun . . . and stands for nothing." Yet in this book he depicts the history of his ambivalence—from that of the obedient boy infatuated with his best friend's defiance to the grown man who when visiting Tijuana returns to sleep in San Diego every night, a brown man fearful of being drowned in a sea of brown faces—and shows how he overcomes the pain of that ambivalence, not by yielding to one side or the other but by accepting the existence of both. Fascinated by duality and paradox, he is no longer their victim.

One built-in limitation of Rodriguez's approach to these matters is that dualities are true in a poetic way—that is, they are valid from a certain emotional perspective only. Americans may well distrust "Mexican shading," and it may be that "we say yes when we mean yes," but for Americans, it seems to me, this is a manner, an aspiration, perhaps an ideal. Although we are unsubtle and value straightforwardness, our very innocence can cause hypocrisy. The problem with dualities is that their counter side can often be asserted with equal vigor. The danger of thinking in mythic entities is that they suddenly seem to be everywhere and make everything appear freighted with symbolic significance, blurring the line between fine observation and mere free association. Rodriguez's disquisition on *adobe* ("Adobe is mud shaped by human intention"), juxtaposed with a list of road signs (WEDDINGS ANYTIME/ANYPLACE), falls over the edge of sense or into the realm of semiotic play, at least to my mind.

But this weakness is probably indivisible from the chief strength of the book, which lies in the pleasure of its poetic prose and the beauty of its aphorisms. I cite several of these, almost at random:

> Femininity is defined by the son as motherhood. Only a culture so cruel to the wife could sustain such a sentimental regard for the *mamacita*.
>
> Information in an authoritarian society is power. In Mexico, power accumulates as information is withheld.
>
> Once upon a time, the homosexual appropriated to himself a mystical province, that of taste. Taste, which is, after all, the insecurity of the middle class, became the homosexual's licentiate to challenge the rule of nature.
>
> In Mexico, one is most oneself in private. The very existence of *tú* must undermine the realm of *usted*. In America, one is most oneself in public.
>
> History and Eden are irreconcilable ideas.
>
> The attention L.A. lavishes on a single face is as generous a metaphor as I can find for the love of God.

These help to turn *Days of Obligation* into a poetic artifact and Richard Rodriguez into a young Octavio Paz, a true poet of the Americas.

Eleemosynary

THE TRAGEDY OF AMERICAN COMPASSION. *By Marvin Olasky. Regnery Gateway. $21.95.*

Reviewed by THEODORE PAPPAS

America's social conscience was imported from Denmark. It came ashore with Jacob Riis, developed through the 1890s with his photographs of the New York tenements, and matured when the federal government entered "The War Against the Slum" during what historians call "The Progressive Crusade." The implication of this simplistic, textbook rendering of history is that, apart from a few teetotaling Protestants of the 1830s and a handful of such noble uplifters as Dorothea Dix and Margaret Fuller, reform in America began only after Riis's photojournalism inspired legislation from Washington; only then did America care about "how the other half lives."

Marvin Olasky—a professor of journalism at the University of Texas at Austin and a senior fellow at the Capital Research Center in Washington, D.C.—believes that, when it comes to charity and battling poverty and vice, the country has paid a high price for its historical amnesia. Olasky maintains that the tragedy of

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American compassion gone awry is the indiscriminate charity from impersonal entities that provides neither hope nor real relief but merely "pauperizes" the welfare class through years of dependency.

To be sure, this is not a new insight. What is novel, however, is Olasky's suggestion that the current welfare plight stems from a change in our cultural conception of compassion and an indifference to pre-twentieth-century methods of reform. Before this century America held to the original definition of compassion, as "suffering with another person, participating in suffering"; today the word denotes a mere "feeling, or emotion, when a person is moved by the suffering or distress of another." Olasky sees a world of policy differences between the definitions: "One demands personal action, the other a 'feeling' that requires a willingness to send a check." *The Tragedy of American Compassion* traces the significance of this changing view from colonial times to the present.

Charity is often the reflection of a society's conception of its god(s), and the colonial American experience was no exception. The early Americans' belief in a God of both justice and mercy produced an understanding of compassion that was, in Olasky's words, "hard-headed but warm-hearted." They interpreted generosity as the giving of time, not treasure, and emphasized hospitality toward those who could not help themselves, as in those suffering destitution from either disease or disaster. For example, the Scots' Charitable Society in 1684 called for the community to open "the bowels of our compassion" to widows like Mrs. Stewart who had "lost the use of her left arm" and whose husband had been "Wash'd Overbord in a Storm." Many colonial communities even compensated individuals, aiding orphans and widows for their out-of-pocket expenses.

The open hand, however, was not extended to all. "Today's believers in 'liberation theology' often argue that God is on the side of the poor," writes Olasky, "but the older distinction showed God backing the mistreated poor and chastising those who had indulged in indolence." Early Americans "did not insist on equal teatment for all who were in trouble. The goal was to serve individuals who had unavoidable problems." For citizens who were alcoholic or recalcitrant and refused to work, towns built workhouses, where rules were strict and strictly enforced.

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What is striking to Olasky, as it will be to any contemporary reader, is how little this circumscribed approach to almsgiving has in common with the pallid humanitarianism that now passes for charity. Colonial Americans never would have hailed as a benefit to society the indiscriminate distribution of food and clothes to people living on the streets. Our forefathers had no use for such "charity without challenge," doles without discernment, in which no demands were made of the indigent to get their lives in order or in which the recipients of alms felt *entitled* to relief. Even Benjamin Franklin, a social crusader of the first order who seldom met a cause he could not embrace, even he realized the debilitating effect of unconditional relief. He was outraged by the system of welfare in England:

> There is no country in the world in which the poor are more idle, dissolute, drunken and insolent. The day you passed that [welfare] act you took away from before their eyes the greatest of all inducements to industry, frugality and sobriety, by giving them a dependence on somewhat else than a careful accumulation during youth and health for support in age and sickness.

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Only in our day have demands on charity recipients and the discernment of the "proper subjects of alms" been deemed "moralistic," "insensitive," if not illegal. Aiding homeless men and women who have abandoned their children, distributing needles to drug addicts and free condoms to the diseased, delineating civil rights for "citizens" defecating on public streets—colonial America never conceived of such enlightened acts of "compassion."

Thousands of private relief agencies sprang up in the decades between the Revolution and the Civil War. As their names often indicated—the Good Samaritan Dispensary, United Hebrew Charities, the Ladies Christian Union—religious beliefs underlay most of their activities. But whether Jewish or Christian, their concerted aim remained assistance to those who could not help themselves and admonitions against large-scale, impersonal relief that, in Olasky's words, treats people "like animals in a zoo at feeding time."

This private and personal approach to philanthropy and reform encountered two staunch challenges in the nineteenth century. The first developed in the 1850s and was led by Horace Greeley. As a forerunner of the Social Gospelers who believed people are naturally good and that everyone has a *right* to earthly prosperity, Greeley had no qualms about using public funds to support the able-bodied poor who refused to work, and because these opinions came from the editor of the influential *New York Tribune*, Greeley's views gained wide currency and respectability. This resulted after the Civil War in the country's first experience with widespread outdoor relief. As Olasky points out, by the early 1870s one-tenth of New York City's population was receiving weekly rations from public storehouses, and with disastrous results. The Brooklyn reformer Seth Low (later elected mayor) called the dole system "a sore on the body politic" and a "vast political corruption fraud." One study showed that more than half of the money spent on the ubiquitous soup kitchens that sprang up in New York during the Depression of 1873 was spent on "feckless bums" and "impostors."

With public-relief bureaucracies awash in fraud, "compassion malaise" was rampant. As the private relief agencies had predicted, bad charity discredited and drove out good charity. Even Horace Greeley acknowledged the folly wrought by his ideas. "The beggars of New York," he complained in 1869, "are at once very numerous and remarkably impudent." Then, going to the opposite extreme, Greeley declared that the "best response" to a person asking for aid was now "Nature's—'Root, hog, or die!'" From utopian socialism to Social Darwinism in a single decade. The Social Darwinist threat to private relief was well-dilated in the pages of Herbert Spencer, Simon Newcomb, and William Graham Sumner.

But the private relief agencies rose to the challenge and underwent a resurgence in popularity in the 1890s. The "Library of Congress [recorded] tens of thousands of points of light," writes Olasky, "including two thousand in Baltimore, Chicago, and New York alone during 1890 (a decade and a half . . . before what became known as the 'social gospel' kicked in)." They fought successfully in major cities against the further takeover of their functions by government agencies; praised the neighborhood approach to reform of the settlement house movement but denounced its professionalization of volunteers and its siren song of Marxism; and took heart in the conditional charity that was succeeding nationally with such organizations as the YMCA, YWCA, and the Salvation Army. Jacob Riis predicted that "if we labor on with courage and patience, [these charities] will bear fruit sixty and a hundred fold," but that all would be for naught if the nation ever forgot that "it is money scattered without judgment—not poverty—that makes the pauper."

This American approach to philanthropy came under relentless assault during the Great Depression. The overt attacks did not come from the official New Dealers, for the severe stigmatization still attached to the dole prevented the marketing of Roosevelt's programs as anything but temporary relief. Instead, the attacks came from the legions of professional social workers recently licensed by the universities, who correctly saw the tradition of private relief as a threat to their professional future and inchoately socialist dreams.

Olasky recounts the punches in this fight, blow for blow. Mary van Kleeck, "high priestess" of welfare, praised Soviet planning and received an award in 1934 from the National Conference of Social Work for her vision of a "collective, worker-controlled society." In 1937, Edith Abbott, president of the NCSW, called for the elimination of all means-tested relief,

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while Dorothy Kahn of the Pennsylvania School of Social Work asked social workers to remove "the organic connection between work and maintenance." In 1940, Abbott called for the "extension and nationalization of aid to those unemployed *for any reason.*" In 1943, Donald Howard, president of the American Association of Social Workers and dean of the UCLA School of Social Welfare, demanded the de-personalization of public aid and a delineation of "rights" by which "no person would have the discretionary power to deny to any eligible applicant the aid *to which he is entitled.*" (Emphases added.)

By the end of the 1930s the idea of a national welfare state doubtless ruffled few feathers of the regnant educational and political elite, but there remained little popular support for Leviathan throughout the 1940s and 1950s. For two centuries of American history, a sense of shame had been relied on to make people reluctant to accept public aid and to insure that welfare remained a necessary wrong and not a right. All this held until the Great Society, the official War on Poverty, and the ensuing legislation of the 1970s. "This, then," writes Olasky,

> was the key change of the 1960's—not so much new benefit programs as a change in consciousness concerning established ones, with government officials approving and even advocating not only larger payouts but a war on shame.

Michael Harrington, the New York School of Social Work, the Congress for Racial Equality, the National Welfare Rights Organization, the "Neighborhood Service Centers" of the Office of Economic Opportunity, whose task was to recruit Americans for public aid—these were but a few of the partisans battling for a new and improved image of the dole. And, as the reader is well aware even without Olasky's final chapter, their victory was resounding—a victory over shame, that is, not poverty.

Olasky should be commended for his useful overview of America's changing approach to relief and reform. Of course, surveys that incorporate the whole of American history, and do so in under three hundred pages, are bound to suffer from gloss-overs and gaps. Too great a reliance on evidence about the Northeastern experience, insufficient attention paid to Southern history, an inadequate account of the extraordinary influence that mass immigration had on American attitudes and actions—these are deficiencies in Olasky's book that a more detailed study would remedy.

In William H. McGuffey's 1844 *Reader*, there is a memorable dialogue between a "Mr. Fantom" and a "Mr. Goodman." When Mr. Goodman mentions his efforts to help a poor apprentice who had been cruelly treated by his master, Mr. Fantom replies:

> You must not apply to me for the redress of such petty grievances. . . . It is provinces, empires, continents, that the benevolence of the philosopher embraces; every one can do a little paltry good to his next neighbor.

To which Mr. Goodman retorts:

> Every one *can*, but I do not see that every one does. . . . [You] have such a noble zeal for the millions, [yet] feel so little compassion for the units.

If the positive reception to Professor Olasky's book is any indication, the Mr. Goodmans still among us should not despair. Further battle over the units is still to come.

The Great Unread

IVAN BUNIN: RUSSIAN REQUIEM, 1885–1920: A PORTRAIT FROM LETTERS, DIARIES, AND FICTION. *Edited with an introduction and notes by Thomas Gaiton Marullo. Ivan R. Dee. $30.*

Reviewed by ANDREW WACHTEL

Ivan Bunin is undoubtedly the greatest Russian writer whom no one reads. Educated Americans developed a taste for Tolstoy and Dostoevsky early on. They eventually warmed to the gentle lyricism of Turgenev, the keen eye of Chekhov, the terse precision of Pushkin, and the extravagance of Gogol. Bulgakov's grotesqueries, Belyi's recondite puzzles,

---

ANDREW WACHTEL, who teaches in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at Northwestern University, is the author of *The Battle for Childhood* and *An Obsession with History.*

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Pasternak's sweeping panoramas, Babel's miniatures, Nabokov's irony, and Solzhenitsyn's expansiveness all have their admirers. But the perfectly balanced, highly poetic prose of the first Russian writer to win the Nobel Prize for Literature (1933) remains almost unknown to the non-Russian reader. There are a few translations of Bunin's work, but they are generally unavailable or out of print.

Bunin's misfortune was to have spent practically his entire literary career as an anti-modernist in the age of modernism and as an implacable foe of the Left at a time when leftist sympathies were practically de rigueur for an artist; he was, in short, both politically and literarily incorrect. Nevertheless, in an extraordinarily long career (from the late 1880s until his death in 1953), Bunin produced a series of major works that are ripe for reappraisal now that many of his ideas, both cultural and political, turn out to have been prophetic rather than retrograde.

Born in 1870 to a rapidly declining Russian gentry family, Bunin could hardly have chosen a worse time. For the Russian gentry, the period between the emancipation of the serfs in 1863 and the Revolution was one of rapid economic decline. Having grown used to relying on the free labor of serfs, few of the former serf owners were able to make the adjustment to a capitalist rural economy. Bunin's father was one of those incapable of making the transition. As a consequence, the author's childhood was lived out on a series of declining family estates, mortgaged and then lost one after another. With the passing of the gentry's economic power in the countryside, an entire culture passed as well. The great nineteenth-century Russian writers had, with few exceptions, come like Bunin from landowning families. Indeed, if one were to place the point of a compass on the Bunin family estates near Orel (some three hundred miles south of Moscow) and draw a circle one hundred miles in diameter, it would encircle the estates of Tolstoy and Turgenev, Leskov, Tiutchev, and Fet. But by the mid-1880s, just as Bunin came of age, the gentry line of Russian literature began sputtering out. The psychological realism that had been developed in the prose of Pushkin and Lermontov and polished to perfection by Tolstoy, Turgenev, and Goncharov had peaked. Gradually it gave way to the works of a new group of non-gentry prose writers who eschewed the novel in favor of the short story (Chekhov, Korolenko, Gorky), and, starting in the 1890s, by the great wave of Russian modernism that dominated the first quarter of this century.

Bunin's own literary career started modestly enough: his first publication was a poem in memory of the shallow but immensely popular poet Semyon Nadson, who crowned his meteoric career by dying of tuberculosis at the romantic age of twenty-five. Despite an almost total lack of formal education (Bunin finished only four years of the six-year high school course of studies), he gradually pushed his way onto the literary scene. He was first recognized as a poet whose laconic style, traditional versification, and concern with Russian nature set him apart from the experimental, European-inflected excesses of the Russian Decadents who were his contemporaries. In a critical article of this period, Bunin staked out his traditionalist position caustically, in a manner he would continue to employ for nearly sixty years:

> Just think about today's literature: Its main feature is that it has already lost the special stamp and character of precisely *Russian* literature. Many of our latest works can be ascribed to any writer you like—a Frenchman, a German, an Englishman. And poets? They write triolets, sonnets, and rondos on medieval and decadent themes—and it all turns out poor, lifeless, and shallow. . . . Today's poets invent phenomenal rhythms; they hatch absurd images and expressions. . . . Russian writers are consciously moving away from the people, from nature, and from the sun. But nature will take cruel revenge for this.

In the 1890s, Bunin began writing prose as well. His stories soon captured the attention of the Russian reading public and Russia's leading writers. In this period, he struck up close friendships with Chekhov and the up-and-coming Maxim Gorky, and he developed cordial relations with the aging Leo Tolstoy. For the American reader, Bunin's similarity to Chekhov will be most apparent. One finds the same ability to pick out essential details, the same kind of taut narrative, although Bunin's prose contains a lyricism alien to Chekhov. Even Bunin's advice to a young writer (from the memoirs of Valentin Kataev) sounds as if it could have come from Chekhov.

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One must write every day, just like a violinist or a pianist must practice for several hours each day without stopping. Otherwise your talent will stagnate and run dry, like a well from which no water has been drawn. . . . What should you write about? Anything you like. . . . If you have no subject or idea, then simply write about what you see. "Say you see a dog running with its tongue hanging out," Bunin said. . . . "Then write about the dog. One or two stanzas. But accurately, authentically, so that it is precisely this dog and no other one."

Unlike Chekhov, however, who may have sensed the end of old Russia but did not live to see it, Bunin was fated to live through the collapse of everything he knew and loved in his land. In the period 1905–1917, Bunin produced some of his greatest prose works: wrenchingly personal novellas such as *The Village* (1910), a blistering exploration of the transformation and spiritual impoverishment of the Russian peasant, and *Dry Valley* (1911), a portrait of a disintegrating gentry family that serves as a bleak and hopeless coda to all the nineteenth-century Russian novels set on country estates, as seen in the following description.

The people of Dry Valley lived a life that was remote and dark but also complex and with a semblance of stability and prosperity. Judging by the stagnancy of this life and the attachment of its people to it, one might have thought it would have gone on forever. . . . Just as the little mounds that top the underground channels and burrows of hamsters vanish one after the other when a field is plowed, so we witnessed the nests of the Dry Valley disappearing swiftly, without a trace. And the people of Dry Valley perished and fled, too. . . . So what we found was not the world of Dry Valley . . . but only the memory of it, an existence that was half wild in its simplicity. As the years went by we visited our home in the steppe more and more rarely. And we grew more and more estranged from it; we felt less and less our tie to the world and the class from which we were descended. . . .

The place where the house at Lunevo stood has been tilled and sown a long time ago, just like the lands of many of the other estates. Dry Valley has held on somehow. But the last of the birches in the garden has been cut down, and practically all the arable land has been sold piecemeal. The owner himself, the son of Pyotr Petrovich, abandoned it—to work as a railway conductor. And the old people of Dry Valley—Klavdiya Markovna, Aunt Tonya, and Natalya—dragged out the last years of their lives in wretchedness. . . .

There is no one left at Dry Valley now. All those mentioned in this chronicle, all their neighbors and contemporaries are dead. And sometimes you wonder if they ever really lived at all.

For a brief time, *The Village* and *Dry Valley* thrust Bunin into a central position in Russia's cultural and political life. His harsh, uncompromising pictures of Russia's rural decay pleased neither those who wished to idealize the past, nor those who believed that a positive transformation was under way on the lands where some 80 percent of the population still lived.

It is the Bunin of this period who stands at the center of Thomas Gaiton Marullo's compilation *Ivan Bunin: Russian Requiem, 1885–1920.* Through well-chosen selections from Bunin's diary and letters, those of his second wife and biographer, the letters and memoirs of friends and acquaintances, as well as excerpts from Bunin's fiction, Marullo paints a portrait of the mature artist. We see Bunin's struggles to understand his country and his

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place in it, to carve a space for himself in an increasingly hostile literary world, and to grapple with eternal questions of life and death. Sandwiched between the views of Bunin's contemporaries are short summaries of the historical and cultural periods through which the author lived. The impetus for such a portrait was provided, it would seem, in an early critical article by Bunin himself: "To understand a work of art . . . one must study the milieu of the author in question. . . . One must know the locale of the artist, the influence of nature on him, his place in society, the political and social conditions of his time, and, finally, the ideas, emotions, and moods of the epoch."

Perhaps the most fascinating section of Marullo's book is the final one, which concentrates on the period between the Bolshevik Revolution and Bunin's immigration to France in 1920. Bunin spent most of this period in Odessa, a city that changed hands several times during the course of the civil war. Marullo draws primarily from the diary of Bunin's wife and from the author's own memoir, *Accursed Days*, a work so scathingly critical of the Communists that it was never published in the Soviet Union, even after Bunin's work as a whole became acceptable in the 1960s.

> I am neither for the left or the right. I have been and will be an unbending enemy of all that is stupid, estranged from life, evil, false, dishonorable, harmful, no matter where it comes from. . . .
>
> I sometimes now think: "There is something marvelous in this ideal . . . democracy," but as I am not a child, I also speak openly and without fear . . . this Russian "democracy" will give birth to the most vile and bloody nonsense.
>
> I have one more thing to say. . . . I have a truly savage contempt for revolutionaries, for how can I not have these feelings . . . when I am in the midst of fratricidal slaughter . . . in shackles, standing at the edge of a hellish abyss to which my homeland is rushing.

With thoughts such as these, Bunin embarked on what was to be a permanent exile from his homeland. Unlike many other emigrés, however, he chose to engage neither in active political work nor in endless complaining. He spent most of the rest of his long life near Grasse in southern France, producing increasingly lyrical and personal works of fiction, including his pseudo-autobiographical novel, *The Life of Arseniev*, and a series of poignant tales published as *Darkened Paths*. The Nobel Prize brought a temporary fame, but there could be no lasting popularity for an emigré writing in a foreign language about an increasingly faraway culture. The Bunin of these later years will be the subject of a second volume that Marullo is now preparing. One can only hope that these volumes, which depict an idiosyncratic yet fascinating individual, will encourage publishers to reissue translations of Bunin's work and readers to explore the rich and varied trove of his fiction. Now that both the literary modernism and political communism Bunin so hated have passed, perhaps it is time to recognize that this politically and culturally incorrect avatar of the Russian gentry was truly a major writer, the final voice of the Russian gentry cultural tradition.

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The Reader Replies

Human Morality and Animal Research

I found Harold Herzog's essay "Human Morality and Animal Research" (Summer 1993) quite thought-provoking but at times painful. As I read his account of Ron Neibor's suffering as he was forced to sacrifice his research cats, I recalled a similar experience of my own.

When I was a senior in college I completed an independent study involving the cerebellum's role in exploratory behavior in rats. My project involved lesioning the animals' cerebellums, then measuring how extensively they explored a novel environment.

Early on I lost a few animals "on the table" due to poor anesthesia technique. The ones who survived, who became my experimental subjects, in the end underwent the perfusion procedure Herzog describes. Perfusing the animals was only minimally emotionally difficult for me at first as I worked on perfecting my technique. But one animal changed that.

I had to take a rat home over Easter break since there would be no one at school to take care of him. My brother, who was then eight years old, fell in love with this rat and named him "Harvey." I even took Harvey the rat to my brother's class at school to talk about animal research. But in the end I had to sacrifice Harvey, too. It was one of the hardest things I've ever done. I still squirm with shame when I think of the needless suffering I caused those animals, and I especially grieve for Harvey.

Dr. Herzog's discussion is the first one I can recall reading that captures the moral ambiguity of both animal researchers' and animal rights activists' positions. Is it defensible to argue that, because humans are currently at the top of the evolutionary and food ladders, we have the right to use any and all species under us as experimental stand-ins, whether it's using rabbits to test cosmetics or using monkeys to study head trauma? On the other hand, if we hold the position that all non-human life is as sacred as human life, we cannot live in modern Western society—or probably in any currently known human social format without doing violence to those species who share the planet with us. About the only defensible society would be one where all occupants rely only on vegetation for all food, clothing, and shelter. (And do we really know how sentient plants are?)

Given that neither extreme can be satisfied, we must find a workable compromise. For example, some animal rights activists want all animal testing and research stopped now. Others lobby to stop the use of animals in studies whose results have already been adequately replicated and confirmed, but would reluctantly allow a minimal number of animals to undergo minimal suffering in studies of clearly demonstrable value to humans. Others focus on the use of animals to test the toxicity of new products of which we already have enough brands on the shelf. Likewise, while some activists advocate total vegetarianism, others mostly want to stop the cruel abuses of factory farming.

Whatever form and direction this dialogue takes in the future, Dr. Herzog has given researchers, consumers, and animal rights activists a few things to think about.

WILLIAM C. GIBSON
Lansdowne, Pennsylvania

Harold Herzog makes a legal error in "Human Morality and Animal Research" (p. 342) when he writes that the Animal Welfare Act excludes rats and mice from coverage, and that recently a federal judge ruled that the exclusion under the law was arbitrary and illogical. Judges do not rule that laws are arbitrary or illogical. The statute in fact covers all warm-blooded animals, but the Department of Agriculture, whom Congress entrusted to enforce the law, decided to exclude rats and mice. (Since rats and mice make up the vast majority of research animals, the Department effectively was virtually repealing the law.)

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It was the Department's action that the judge ruled arbitrary and illogical. As Mr. Herzog notes, the matter is currently under appeal. The Clinton administration should tell the Department of Agriculture not to pursue the appeal, as the judge was clearly correct in his ruling.

HENRY COHEN
Baltimore, Maryland

HAROLD HERZOG replies: I thank Mr. Cohen for pointing out that the decision of District Court Judge Charles Richey was directed at the Secretary of Agriculture's interpretation of the Animal Welfare Act rather than the legislation per se. While the brief mention of the act was only tangentially related to the major point of my article, his letter piqued my curiosity and prompted me to read the Act and the associated regulations promulgated by the Department of Agriculture. This was no small task as the most recent version of the act and its amendments is 18 pages in length. The associated USDA regulations (Code of Federal Regulations, Title 9, Chapter 1, Subchapter A - Animal Welfare) are documented in 110 pages of small print which include topics such as the number of hamsters that can be transported in a single container (fifty) and the formula for calculating the spatial requirements for laboratory dogs: "Find the mathematical square of the sum of the length of the dog measured in inches (measured from the tip of its nose to the base of the tail) plus 6 inches; then divide the product by 144."

It is, however, our government's definition of the term "animal" which is most related to the theme of my article. The definition of an animal is found in Section 2(g) of the act. There are two parts to the definition. The first specifies what is included, and the second lists animals that are excluded from coverage. The parts are separated by a semicolon.

The first part states, *"The term "animal" means any live or dead dog, cat, monkey (nonhuman primate mammal), Guinea pig, hamster, or other such warm-blooded animal, as the Secretary may determine is being used, or is intended for use for research, testing, experimentation, or exhibition purposes, or as a pet."* One then must turn to the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service guidelines to find the Secretary of Agriculture's interpretation of the definition. It offers the following proviso, *"This term (animal) excludes: Birds, rats of the genus* Rattus *and mice of the genus* Mus *bred for use in research. . . ."* Note that rats and mice constitute 80 to 90 percent of the animals used by biomedical researchers in the United States.

This exclusion, which was the subject of Judge Richey's decision that the Department of Agriculture's interpretation of the act was "arbitrary and capricious," exemplifies the contradictions I described in my article. To wit, while the meadow jumping mouse (*Xapus hudsonius*) has legal and moral standing under the regulations, the house mouse (*Mus musculus*), the species used in the bulk of biomedical research, does not. I know of no biological reason to suspect that meadow jumping mice are more capable of suffering than house mice. Indeed, the USDA's definition of an animal means a dead dog has more moral status than a live laboratory mouse. (It is only fair to note that the regulations are not completely capricious; while dead dogs are covered under the act, a footnote in the regulations exempts them from the cage size and feeding requirements.)

The second part of the definition follows the semicolon, and its interpretation is not left to the discretion of the Secretary of Agriculture: ". . . *but such term ("animal") excludes horses not used for research purposes and other farm animals, such as, but not limited to livestock or poultry, used or intended for improving animal nutrition, breeding, management or production efficiency, or for improving the quality of food or fiber.*" Thus Mr. Cohen's statement that the Animal Welfare Act covers all warm-blooded animals is incorrect. For example, none of the 100 million cattle or the 4 billion chickens housed on ranches and farms is entitled to any protection under the act, nor are pigs, sheep, goats, ducks or horses that are maintained for agricultural uses. In comparison, the number of vertebrate animals used in scientific research (generally estimated at about 20 million) seems rather paltry.

That the vast majority of animals slated for human use are specifically excluded by Congress from coverage under the Animal Welfare Act lends credence to the central point of my article—that our attitudes and policies toward non-human species are mired in a complex milieu of self-interest, emotion, cultural inertia, linguistic nuance, and occasionally, logic. I suspect that Mr. Cohen and I have little disagreement on this point.

Science in Trouble

Freeman Dyson in "Science in Trouble" (Autumn 1993) wants to shoulder guilt, and heap it onto fellow scientists, for "the heavy preponderance of toys for the rich over necessities for the poor in the output of our laboratories." What "toys"? The drugs that permit my mother to live on with much better physical mobility than past victims of Parkinson's disease? The safer auto-

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mobile and air transportation now within the means of ordinary working people? The host of agricultural and medical innovations that contribute to better diet and to longer, healthier lives?

Yes, Big Science is competitive, entrepreneurial, and driven by market forces. But that is no reason to lament its many great achievements in our time.

Besides, the rich grow bored with their toys soon enough. Then we may enjoy watching them trying to unload sailboats, pricey real estate, etc., in the classified columns.

ROBERT P. FAIRCHILD
Hampton, Virginia

Surely Freeman Dyson is exaggerating ("Science in Trouble," Autumn 1993) when he claims that technology and its creators are to blame for the growing gap between rich and poor countries and between rich and poor people in this country. The rapidly growing economies of East Asia are moving from poverty to affluence through the acquisition and manufacture of technology. Improvements in agricultural technology have made it possible for the world's food supply to keep up with its growing population, setting war and maldistribution aside. Medical technology has reduced infant mortality rates and increased longevity by eliminating plagues, except where rates of illegitimacy have risen out of control and drug abuse and sodomy have become common social practices. Communications technology has opened up free markets and broken down systems of centralized bureacracy that have stifled enterprise and initiative. Environmental technology has made industrial growth compatible with the conservation of natural resources and the survival of natural diversity. Each of the above technological advances has had its price, but none of them would have been possible if technology were merely equated with exploitation.

Technology has certainly reduced the need for semi-skilled labor in many industries, creating pockets of unemployment, but it may be worse to exaggerate the benefits that can be derived from technology than to exaggerate the damage that it inflicts. That the uneducated youth of our inner cities will be transformed into respectable citizens, not just gainfully, but meaningfully employed by means of healthy doses of technology, is a dubious proposition at best. At worst, the levels of technology needed to effect this transformation are not those that scientists are likely to devise. Education reform, welfare reform, and adequate law enforcement are not matters of technology but political will, our lack of which is made to appear all the more ludicrous by the proliferation of technological gains.

If scientists were really serious about taking responsibility for the plight of urban society and public morality, they would be opening chains of laundromats and convenience stores, cheap restaurants, gas stations, furniture repair shops, not just neighborhood clinics, although these are fine, so long as they are adequately manned by security guards. Also, scientists would disengage themselves from supporting hapless public school systems and support the right of parents to send their children to private and parochial schools (even technology-oriented ones). If scientists were really serious, they would design boomerang bullets so that teenaged punks shooting at one another or at innocent passers-by would shoot themselves in the foot. Above all, if scientists were really serious, they would quit moralizing about technology, as if technology, not human nature, were at the root of it all.

ROBERT KORNFELD
Chicago, Illinois

Richard Feynman served on the panel that investigated the Challenger disaster. Because he did, the public learned about NASA and about the behavior of politically inspired investigating panels, while NASA was forced to confront the blunders and wishful thinking in its engineering.

When Freeman Dyson was asked to serve on a panel to oversee the National Institutes of Health's investigation of the ethics of Robert Gallo, he nevertheless wrote about it (THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, Autumn 1993). Whereas Feynman learned about the Challenger by studying the spacecraft, Dyson draws conclusions about scientific misconduct from analogies to past events.

He believes that administrators of science try to obey what they think is the will of Representative John Dingell, just as last generation's administrators toadied to Senator McCarthy. In fact, administrators of science have treated Dingell with something very near contempt. They set up a succession of offices supposedly to police biomedical ethics, but which, in fact, systematically whitewashed scientific misconduct. Like the earlier administrators, the present ones are motivated by fear, but the bullies that frighten them are inside, not outside biomedicine. The Baltimore affair and Gallo case were rare exceptions in which, for a while, the administrators were more afraid of Dingell than of the big operators in biomedical research.

Professor Dyson focuses on presumed slippery

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geniuses in science, and says their accomplishments outweigh whatever damage they cause. Alas, many in biomedicine are slippery without being geniuses, and their favor trading in peer review can drive honest scientists from a discipline and bring progress to a stop.

Why they exist so particularly in biomedicine is debated. I think it is because the National Institutes of Health lets scientists carve up the public money among themselves, unsupervised by any umpire. Large-scale public support of science began in the U.S.A. at the end of World War II. As in other socialist experiments, one generation was long enough to breed a class of politically skillful people who see nothing wrong in exploiting the system for their own advantage.

CHARLES W. MCCUTCHEN
Princeton, New Jersey

FREEMAN DYSON replies: Thank you for your comments about my piece in the Autumn 1993 AMERICAN SCHOLAR. I much prefer negative to positive comments. Positive comments only soothe the ego. From negative comments I can learn something.

Each of you has a different message, but from all of you I learned that I should have spelled out more explicitly the complaints I was making against science. Since I am a scientist in love with science, I thought the present troubles of science did not need to be spelled out. Your comments show me that they do.

While I was writing this piece, the tragedy of the supercollider was always in my thoughts. I did not mention it, because I did not wish my essay to be the straw that would break that camel's back. Now that the back is broken and the camel is dead, I may speak frankly. The supercollider is dead, among other reasons, because it gave to the public and to their representatives in Congress a strong impression that scientists are greedy. That impression was strong because it was true. The greed of scientists has done grave damage, not only to the supercollider but to science as a whole.

I hope one day to write a better article. The purpose is not to change your minds but to open your eyes.

Thanks for your help.

Remembering Criticism

Many of your readers, I assume, are upset over the failure of John W. Aldridge in "Remembering Criticism" in the Autumn 1993 issue to include Randall Jarrell in his list of great literary critics of the forties and fifties. As literary editor of the *Nation* during that era, Jarrell wrote some of the sharpest, wittiest, and most insightful poetry criticism to ever appear in print in this country. His *Poetry and the Age* has never been surpassed as a readable treatise on what distinguishes lousy poetry from the good stuff.

Although I cannot read Mr. Aldridge's mind, I have a sense that Jarrell was omitted from his laundry list because he did not fit neatly into one of Aldridge's cubbyholes. For example, Jarrell never belonged to the New Criticism Club—in fact, he ridiculed its excesses—and he never let socioeconomic liberalism cloud his literary judgements. He wrote simply as Randall Jarrell. That should be sufficient reason for Aldridge bringing America's foremost poetry critic in from the cold.

BURLING LOWREY
Washington, D.C.

JOHN ALDRIDGE replies: Since my essay, "Remembering Criticism," was obviously in large part a personal reminiscence, I mentioned those critics who were most respected by, and had the greatest influence on, literarily inclined young people of about my age. Yes, most of them, but not all, were so-called New Critics because the movement to which they belonged was the dominant one during the period with which I was concerned.

As I recall, most of us had the greatest respect for the criticism of Randall Jarrell. But he, perhaps unjustly, never had the massive influence upon us that Tate, Blackmur, Wilson, and Trilling had. For that reason I did not mention him, and for the same reason I omitted such excellent critics as Yvor Winters, William Empson, S. R. Leavis, and René Wellek.

Nicely Out of It

Three points regarding Aristides' "Nicely Out of It" (Autumn 1993):

First, to be really out of it is not to know one is out of it or even to know that "it" is, much less to know the oscillation in/out.

Second, the masochist/sadist joke's punch line is not "No." It's "Later." Perhaps being off a bit with the joke is another mitigating proof that Aristides is only slightly out of it, not completely. People who are out of it completely don't tell jokes, even ones where they're a little off in the delivery. They *are* the joke.

Finally, most of Aristides' out-of-itness is

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merely a case of untimeliness. But it is possible to be untimely and yet be with it most profoundly in the larger scheme of things. Witness Nietzsche's *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, translated as "Untimely Meditations" or sometimes as "Thoughts Out of Season." Nietzsche was so far out of it that he could see it more clearly, and so seeing, start a new sense of timeliness by which we now can measure our own out-of-itness. Indeed, we've come to appreciate his own withitness in being out-of-it.

You see, the trick is to be out of it in just the right way and at the right time.

BILL JOHNSTON, JR.
Pt. Richmond, California

The Fate of a Story

All that is missing from Peter Shaw's fine essay in the Autumn 1993 SCHOLAR on the recent critical perversions of *Billy Budd* is a closer look at the story's setting, which is noticed but not as fully related to Captain Vere's tragic choice as it might be.

Had Melville wished to write a parable about the law and the exercise of authority in general he was capable of setting it in a civilian world in which extenuations might be taken into account and mercy therefore would be a livelier option. He chose instead to set *Billy Budd* on a Royal Navy vessel during a war that many (certainly not all) civilized Englishmen viewed as the ultimate clash with tyranny—and, moreover, against a background of mutinous discontent in the ranks.

Those who pillory Captain Vere as the epitome of all oppressive authority whatever should be challenged to ask themselves why Melville's setting is specifically military, and then to explain their strange perspective on military command. If they are Quakers, or other kinds of pacifists, they are home free. They may dismiss Vere's dilemma as the ugly consequence of warfare, a barbaric institution, radically faulty and not to be countenanced by moral folk. Likewise anarchists. True to their theory they may prefer Hobbes's "war of all against all" to constituted authority, and certainly to the near absolute authority of a ship captain in wartime.

For the rest of us, including the critics discussed by Peter Shaw, it is less easy to escape Vere's dilemma, which is fundamental. All authority may be unlawfully exercised. But Melville offers no evidence that Captain Vere is a usurper, or indeed that he has so much as a scintilla of the martinet's instinct. Quite the contrary. But in the military environment in wartime, where the whole crew's life is at risk, special and exacting rules necessarily apply. The act of insubordination committed by Billy Budd, however impulsive or morally innocent, might disrupt command and jeopardize the lives of all. That is the severity of the world in which Captain Vere operates; and those who assume its special responsibilities must be capable of discharging them unsentimentally, even when they are fully aware of its ambiguities and injustices—as Captain Vere surely is. That is indeed why he is captain and others on the *Bellipotent* are not, and why sane people in conditions of extreme danger would prefer Vere's command, for all its severity and literal-mindedness, to the mushy sentimentality of his critics.

The real objection to the mindless misreadings and libels of Captain Vere is that they spring, as Melville surely knew, from the dangerous innocence of those, true heirs and disciples of Rousseau, who think that the serpent always enters Eden in the guise of authority, and probably military authority at that. Many good little academic radicals have an abiding urge to light out for the wilderness when danger and complexity threaten and unpleasant choices must be made. So did Huck Finn, when Aunt Polly called; but he was a boy and a mere apprentice to civilized complexities, if a precocious one. Literary critics have less excuse; and unlike Huck, some of them never learn.

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Liberty: "One Very Simple Principle"?

Gertrude Himmelfarb's critique of John Stuart Mill's "One Very Simple Principle" of Liberty (Autumn 1993) calls for the same response that Frederic Bastiat made to the socialists of 1850 in his classic *The Law:*

> Socialism, like the ancient ideas from which it springs, confuses the distinction between government and society. As a result of this, every time we object to a thing being done by government, the socialists conclude that we object to its being done at all.
> We disapprove of state education. Then the socialists say that we are opposed to any education. We object to a state religion. Then the socialists say that we want no religion at all. We object to a state-enforced equality. Then they say that we are against equality. And so

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on, and so on. It is as if the socialists were to accuse us of not wanting persons to eat because we do not want the state to raise grain.

Thus Dr. Himmelfarb appears to say that because Mill's principle of political liberty does not mention social, cultural, and moral virtue, its inevitable meaning is to disparage or dismiss such virtue. Mill perhaps confuses this by speaking of the power of "society" over the individual, instead of just the state; but Himmelfarb at the same time admits that there is the "other Mill" who is fully aware of the role of virtue in society. The two Mills are a puzzle for her, but they need not be a puzzle for us, if we are aware of such a distinction as Bastiat's. What, after all, is Dr. Himmelfarb proposing? Is government now to get into the business of promoting religion and private morality? That would hardly be constant with the principles of the Founders of the American republic. Certainly not Paine and Jefferson. If Dr. Himmelfarb does wish to promote the role of the state in morally restoring the people, it is not an accident that we can quote against her Bastiat's response to the statist socialists.

The truth is that our failure of virtue is not so much a private, social, and moral one, manifest in pornography, etc., but in fact a political failure, just as the likes of Paine, Jefferson, and Madison feared it would be. This Dr. Himmelfarb does not notice. Our failure of political virtue comes in our supine accommodation to the growing tyrannies and thieveries of government. Few of the particulars with which the Declaration of Independence charged King George III could not now be made against American government at all levels. The letter and the spirit of the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the Common Law are constantly and increasingly being violated, and despotic authorities are continually being proposed, created, and enlarged. The power of the Federal Government long ago spilled over the boundaries set for it by the Constitution. If the present level of Federal taxation and the present degree of Federal regulation and interference in the daily conduct of business and in the private lives of all Americans were made known to the people of Jefferson's generation, there would have been instantaneous and universal rebellion in every single one of the Thirteen Colonies. What we have now is so far the opposite of what was ever intended for the Government of the United States, that our Founders would feel nothing but shame for the state to which we have brought ourselves and nothing but contempt for the ease with which we accept our serfdom. I dare say they would have felt more admiration for David Koresh than for most of today's Americans.

The connection between the failure of political virtue and the failure of social and moral virtue is not far to seek or hard to find. The corrosive effect of the Welfare State on the qualities that make for productivity, stability, and the growth of private wealth and welfare have now been well documented by the likes of Charles Murray (*Losing Ground*) and Thomas Sowell (*Ethnic America*, etc.). The peonization of the American people proceeds apace; and our state of abject dependence on the paternalistic protection of government is what degrades all the moral virtues of prudence, responsibility, and self-reliance that Jefferson contemplated in his nation of independent yeoman farmers.

The solution is clearly to restore our political virtue first, for its lapse is the true source of the decay. That done, those whose private moral virtues fail will have to reckon with the consequences of that failure, as they did in all of American history right down to the point where we decided that the government owes everyone a decent living, regardless of their actions, abilities, or character. It is not for the state to begin promoting virtue, but for it to cease promoting vice. If virtue is not robbed of its reward and if vice is not compensated for its penalties, then the natural incentives to private virtue will begin operating again.

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THE CASE OF SIGMUND FREUD

Medicine and Identity at the Fin de Siècle

SANDER L. GILMAN

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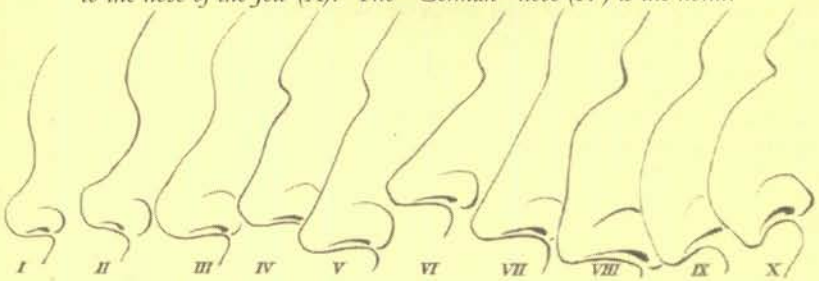
German physiognomist Carl Huter's 1904 study of the nose and its relation to character and beauty. The scale runs from the child's nose (I) to the nose of the Jew (X). The "German" nose (IV) is the norm.



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